



SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

*(Photo: Karsh)*

# STAFFORD CRIPPS

A Biography

*by*

ERIC ESTORICK



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I wish to express my gratitude for documentary material made available to me and for permission granted for publication. I must add that since this is a biography of a man and not a book of fiction, all the characters are real and not imaginary. They can, therefore, be held responsible only for what is directly attributed to them by quotation. All other observations and opinions are the author's.

To Richard J. Walsh and Henry Dessau, for their great personal interest and assistance, I add my grateful thanks.

To Lady Cripps, whose wisdom and help have brought this work to fruition, a profound and affectionate acknowledgment

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## PROLOGUE

WHEN the author decided to embark on this biography he approached Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps for their assistance and met with a most generous measure of response. They allowed him to use a great deal of private correspondence, manuscripts, diaries and family records but without of course accepting any responsibility for what appears in the following pages. The author is equally indebted on those same terms for conversations and correspondence to Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Earl of Halifax, Sir John Anderson, Countess Mountbatten of Burma, and to Sir Stafford's Labour colleagues, especially Hugh Dalton, Herbert Morrison, Arthur Greenwood, Aneurin Bevan, John Strachey, Harold Wilson, Hugh Gaitskell and many others.

In 1941 the author introduced to the American public his subject *Stafford Cripps. Prophetic Rebel* (less than a dozen pages of that book re-appears in this one) with the words: "He is a man about whom we Americans want to know and about whom we shall want to know much more." He was then British Ambassador to Moscow and had signed the pact of Alliance between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union which contributed so greatly to the triumph of the Allied Cause in World War II. To-day he is Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, controller and co-ordinator of her economy. Almost from the day he stepped into the political arena in 1930, already known as one of Britain's most brilliant lawyers and Churchmen, Cripps leapt into the front rank of Britain's political leaders and to-day is recognised as a world statesman of the highest order.

This is not the story of a man who ascended from humble origin to become a power in his land, but of a son of the English gentry steeped in the traditions of "the enlightened upper middle-class" of England, trained to serve in Church and State "with cultivated refinement and sense of social obligation" who became a scientist, lawyer, churchman, politician, a leading

statesman of the British Labour Government This kind of career is not peculiar to British politics, although of its kind it is probably the most outstanding in modern English history. In England more than in any country in the world it has not been unusual for scions of the ruling class to place themselves at the head of resurgent movements of the working class.

It is true that the Cripps-Potter family were no aristocrats, they had no hereditary titles and were not, like the Woods (Halifax) and Guinesses (Iveagh), both nineteenth-century titles, assimilated into the aristocracy They were kin to what Beatrice (Potter) Webb, an aunt of Cripps, has called "the country gentlemen and public service families", which included "the Hobhouses, Farrers, Aclands, and Stracheys".

All these families have contributed to what may be described as the liberal conscience of England!

Unlike the French Revolution, which was largely anti-clerical, the liberal conscience of England evolved as part of a peculiar religious history. The great English revolutionaries of the seventeenth-century, from Cromwell to Winstanley, to say nothing of the "turbulent priests" of earlier ages, St. Thomas à Becket, Wycliffe, John Ball, Jack Straw, More, Latimer, clothed their campaigns from beginning to end in scriptural texts and formulæ. And this practice has not died out in England as so largely it has elsewhere. Many of the Chartist leaders were clergymen, like J. R. Stephen, Richard Oastler, C. S. Bull, Vicar of Brierly near Bradford, and Ernest Jones, who claimed to preach the democracy of Christ. Labour to-day is still largely Nonconformist. As Clement Attlee, Britain's Prime Minister, has written.

"Leaving aside Owen and the early pioneers, I think that the first place in the influence that built up the Socialist movement must be given to religion. England in the nineteenth century was still a nation of Bible readers. To put the Bible into the hands of an Englishman is to do a very dangerous thing. He will find there material which may send him out as a preacher of some religious, social or economic doctrine. I think that the majority of those who have built up the Socialist movement in this country have been adherents of the Christian religion—and not merely adherents but enthusiastic members of some religious body. There are probably more texts from the Bible enunciated from Socialist platforms than from those of all other parties."

Stafford Cripps is in the direct line of this great tradition of England's social and political life. First and foremost he is an

Englishman. No matter what his activity he stamps it with British nationalism. His Christianity is British Christianity. His Socialism is British Socialism. Even in the days when he associated with the revolutionaries for a "United Working-Class Front" it was "British Working Class Unity" he wanted. But he is more than a nationalist. He is a Christian nationalist who is intensely religious. Organised religion is to him the moral power-house for rousing the Christian conscience, and his politics are his practical application of the Christian ethic. He is preacher and prophet as well as statesman, ever proclaiming "what ye sow that shall ye also reap . . ." "By their deeds ye shall know them".

At the same time he is a man of immense intellectual capacity and achievement, a trained scientist, a great lawyer, technician, organiser of industry and a man of tireless and yet controlled energy.

He is often referred to as the apostle of austerity and an ascetic in his way of life. The first has nothing to do with the latter. It is a political label put upon him in the circumstances of war economy. For, in February, 1942, in his first speech to the House of Commons as Leader of the House, Lord Privy Seal and spokesman of the war-time Coalition Government headed by Mr. Winston Churchill, Cripps said:

"The circumstances are very grave, and the Government are convinced that it is the wish of the people in this country to treat this grave situation with all the seriousness and austerity that it undoubtedly demands."

Nor is Cripps an ascetic. He is a vegetarian and a teetotaler. To-day he is, no doubt, a vegetarian from choice, but he became such in the search for a diet which he could digest after an illness contracted while serving in France in the course of the First World War. He became a teetotaler on moral grounds. It was his struggle against the illness of 1915-20, and which often recurred afterwards, which led him to habits of self-control which have given rise to the charge of asceticism. He is neither austere nor an ascetic. On the contrary, Cripps and his family abound in good-natured humour; they laugh more than most and see humour in small things. Nevertheless, it might well be said that he became convinced when young that

"Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control,  
These alone lead life to sovereign power"



for out of the struggle against illness he gained a knowledge of himself and brought his whole way of life under the conscious control of his mind. he learned from F Mathias Alexander about conscious control of the psycho-physical organism and cultivated habits which would enable him to get the maximum health and the maximum of life out of every twenty-four hours. Above all, he has been inspired with a purpose, that of translating into economic, political and social life the ethical teaching of Christ as he understands it. This religious purpose dominates throughout. His religion is not a one-day-in-seven affair or a zealous fanaticism but an every-day practice. It was this which drove him into the British Labour Movement, inspired his ambitions and has brought him into the front ranks of statesmanship.

This biography is, therefore, more than a formal record of his rise to positions of power. It is an attempted interpretation, as well as a record, of the most outstanding English representative of the liberal Christian conscience, of the "country gentlemen and public service families" who made so great an impression upon nineteenth-century England and played so great a part in the shaping of the British Labour and Socialist Movement of the twentieth century. While the tradition is the same, the setting has vastly changed. The pedestrianism of the last century has been superseded by the storms and upheavals of this one, wherein Britain and her Empire have been shaken to their foundations and war and revolution have characterised the epoch of Sir Stafford's career. Set in the background of these stirring times his story is at one and the same time his personal history and his impact on the world of men and things as it rushes into the "age of the common man".

## CHAPTER I

### FAMILY BACKGROUND

**R**ICHARD STAFFORD CRIPPS, born in London on the 24th April, 1889, was the fifth child and fourth son of Charles Alfred and Theresa Cripps. Previous to her marriage, his mother was Theresa Potter. The Cripps' and the Potters represent two English streams of life, the origins of which reach far back in English history, and from which had derived England's Parliamentary system of government. To this very day there stands in the Thames Valley, not far west from the house in which Richard Stafford Cripps was brought up, the ruins of Copcott where once lived, in the reign of King John, one Willmus Cripps, then known too as Sire Crispe de Stanlake.

The Potter family stream back to the tenant farmers of Yorkshire who left farming behind on the tide of the Industrial Revolution. When Charles Alfred Cripps married Theresa Potter in 1881, a son of the ancient English squirearchy wedded a daughter of the manufacturing and merchant class of England which rose to power and affluence in the age of Queen Victoria.

Thus two remarkable families came together, each steeped in its own tradition, each characteristic of the class differentiations in the ruling forces of England, rich and conscious of power, as if by nature issuing orders and taking for granted that those not in their confraternity of power should execute the orders. In accord with this, we find Beatrice Potter, sister of Theresa Potter, and later the lifetime partner of Sidney Webb, writing of her father:

"By temperament the least autocratic and most accommodating of men, he spent his whole life giving orders. He ordered his stockbroker to buy and sell shares, his solicitor to prepare contracts and undertake legal proceedings. In the running of the timber yards, his intervention took the form of final decisions with regard to the new developments in buying and selling, the new agreements with railway companies as to rates and transport facilities. When those maps of continents were unrolled before him, I listened with fascinated interest to eager discussions, whether a line of railway should run through this section or that, at what exact point the station or junction should be placed, what land should be

purchased for the contingent town, whether this patch or that, of forest, coalfield or mineral ore, should be opened up or left for future generations to exploit. And when, one after another, my sisters' husbands joined the family group, they also were giving orders, the country gentleman on his estate and at Sessions, the manufacturer in his mill; the ship-owner to his fleet of ships on the high seas, the city financier in the money market floating or refusing to float foreign government loans, the Member of Parliament as Financial Secretary to the Treasurer, the surgeon and the barrister well on their way to leadership in their respective professions."

Thus confidently, when the Potter family joined forces with the Cripps', were the men of the Potter family playing their part in the key positions of commercial and industrial England. Simultaneously, Charles Alfred Cripps, when he married Theresa Potter in the year 1881, was a rising, successful young barrister, a country gentleman, an accomplished debater, a Conservative remote from industrialism, practising law before the Parliamentary Committee in the House of Commons, and living at his country house and on his farm in Buckinghamshire.

Charles Alfred Cripps was the third son and sixth child of Henry William and Julia Cripps. The father, in whose footsteps the son was to follow, had been a scholar and Fellow of New College, Oxford, a contemporary of Gladstone. At thirty years of age, he had become famous as a Queen's Counsel and an authority on ecclesiastical law. His standard work, *The Law Relating to Church and Clergy*, was later edited by Charles Alfred Cripps and was subsequently to be revised and brought up-to-date by his grandson, Stafford, when he too had become a lawyer. Although he was pressed to stand for Parliament, Henry William Cripps refused. He preferred county and local affairs, in which he "took pride and satisfaction". He was a classical scholar and saw to it that his son Charles received his first lesson in Latin grammar on his sixth birthday. A good week-day for Henry Cripps would include hunting and partridge-shooting until lunch, followed by the reading of Greek plays with the children.

His wife, Julia, was the daughter of Charles Lawrence, also of Cirencester and niece of Sir William Lawrence, the great surgeon. She was a well-educated woman who spoke several languages, studied music, art and literature, and was deeply religious—a classical example of the most cultured of the Victorian middle-class. She kept a diary which reveals much of



FAMILY GROUP, SHOWING CHARLES ALFRED AND THERESA CRIPPS  
WITH THEIR CHILDREN, 1891

*Below: EXTRACT FROM CHARLES ALFRED'S DIARY, JUNE 4TH, 1890,  
WHEN STAFFORD HAD BARELY PASSED HIS FIRST BIRTHDAY:  
"Baby does not sleep well, but his mother thinks he has too great a brain-  
development, and looks to him as the rising genius among her boys. . . ."*

June 4th 1890

32 Elm Park Garden

*Baby does not sleep well, but his mother thinks he has too great a brain development, & looks to him as the rising genius among her boys. we have every thing to be thankful for & we feel grateful.*

C. A. C.



THERESA CRIPPS AND HER SON, STAFFORD, AGED TWO, 1891

Parmoor  
26 juin 1893

Cher Père,  
I love  
dear Mother

very much to Marlow  
and every in the carriage  
day I think Lots of love  
of her from  
M<sup>re</sup> Hobbs Staffie  
went down

STAFFORD'S  
LETTERS TO HIS  
FATHER AND  
MOTHER, 1893

July 5<sup>th</sup>  
Parmoor  
Dear Patern,  
My picture  
has not  
began but  
Miss Grant  
has made

a well little  
me just for  
the colours  
Margaret has  
been with us  
4 years - to do  
1060 kisses your  
little boy  
Staffie

Dear Mother, Franky and  
I love Dora came to  
you about two play with us  
hundred pounds yesterday  
I send you a Ta-ra-ra-ra-  
cowslip. I boom-de-ay!  
got a cowslip Love + kisses  
ball Stafford



IN MOURNING FOR THERESA CRIPPS, AUGUST 1893, FAMILY GROUP  
AT LONGFORDS, MRS. PLAYNE, THERESA'S SISTER, HOLDS STAFFORD

her personality. One entry made when she was twenty years of age reads:

"I am daily more convinced of the utility of reading the Psalms and Lessons appointed by the Church for each day. Nothing is got through without regularity and a uniform plan Up at five, read the Psalms and Lessons. Worked Took geranium cuttings and put fresh glasses on the bees After breakfast wrote letters and studied as usual Writing German, reading French history, etc, then reading Tasso again that I may not forget my Italian. Reading Wheatley on Common Prayer until bedtime Very interesting to find how ancient and carefully selected our beautiful liturgy is "

One Sabbath day in 1841, the spread of industrialism created a sensation. She wrote in her diary:

"A steam engine came up to the station from London for the first time about 9 o'clock It occasioned such confusion and bustle that papa ordered it back again to Kemble. The men were all at work as on a week-day, and Mr Powell (the Rector) came up to speak to papa about it before church, in consequence of which it was stopped It was very extraordinary and wrong to send it upon Sunday. Mr Powell, in a short and interesting address before his sermon, mentioned the efforts which had been successfully made to stop such a profanation of the Sabbath, and entreated all his hearers to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy "

Henry Cripps and family came to live at Parmoor, a property of nearly 400 acres in the lovely Chiltern hills Julia Cripps had come from a stately residence known as "The Querns" of Cirencester, set amidst fields and woods as beautiful as those of Parmoor But Parmoor was to be her home until 1884, when her son Charles Alfred became its owner. Henry Cripps then leased a house close to Parmoor, called "Beechwood", and at the age of sixty-nine retired from his profession.

But the history of the Cripps' does not begin with Henry and Julia. Henry was the eldest son of the Reverend Henry Cripps, vicar of Preston and Cirencester, in the County of Gloucester And the Reverend Henry was the son of Joseph Cripps who was born in 1765, grew up during the American War of Independence, and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. He represented Cirencester in ten Parliaments, and became the "father" of the House of Commons. He was a banker, became



Deputy Governor of Van Dieman's Land Company, a Justice of the Peace, and Chairman of the Gloucester Quarter Sessions. It was into this tradition, enfolded and steeped in well-to-do Christian paternalism, that Charles Alfred Cripps, the father of Stafford Cripps, was born and reared. With Christian love, deeply entrenched in the family, went Christian duties. One of Alfred's duties as a boy was to take food to the cottages where there was sickness among the families of the farm workers. He was to say in later years that it was what he learned on these visits of the poverty and sickness in the lives of the farm workers which convinced him that drastic changes were necessary in the economic life of England for it to be able honestly to claim to be a Christian country.

Educated at the very private "public" school, Winchester College, founded in 1387, and at New College, Oxford, Charles Alfred Cripps had a brilliant academic career.

He was no mean sportsman too—a good footballer who won his way into the Oxford University team. He played in the cup-tie final, the first and only time Oxford won it. An amateur boxer, he thought professionalism degrading of sport.

When he went to Henley Grammar School at the age of eight, he was already learning the first elements of Greek and Latin under his father's tuition. Later he was placed under the charge of a "famous coach who prepared pupils for the entrance scholarships at Winchester College". He gained a scholarship for entrance to Winchester College in 1865. Winchester College was then an ancient and conservatively run institution where he, as junior fag in Sixth Chambers, had to rise at "five o'clock in the morning, to light the fires and make the preparations for the toilet of the prefects, when later they left their beds, so as to be in time for morning chapel". At Oxford, where he was a contemporary and friend of Asquith, he took first-class honours in mathematics in 1873, history in 1874, law in 1875 and civil law in 1876. In the latter year he was elected to an open Fellowship at St. John's College. He was asked if he was prepared to stay at Oxford and do tutorial work but he had long ago made his choice of a career. Before he left Winchester for Oxford University he wrote to his father of his ambitions:

" . . . If you think there would ever be any chance of my getting on, I should much rather be a barrister than in any other profession but it is impossible for me to know, how far there would be any such prospect, and so you must tell me. I should not expect to get on nearly so well as

you have done, but then there are several lower grades which would content me, since

‘Non omnia possumus omnes’

There would in any case be the same opportunities for me as for most of the other young barristers when they first begin . . . ”

He had little to fear. He became a lawyer, a Queen’s Counsel, a politician and statesman and finally lifted his family from the ranks of squirearchy to the aristocracy by becoming a Baron, Lord Parmoor. He was created a peer by Asquith in 1914, to sit in the Privy Council Appeal Court, because the Canadians were at that time complaining of the weakness of the court, which was strengthened by his appointment. Starting in the home of Conservatism, Parmoor ultimately became a Minister in two Labour Governments.

But when Stafford was born in 1889 Charles Alfred Cripps was the head of a Conservative household with a long Conservative tradition, situated in a Conservative constituency, “far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife”, serene, comfortable, self-confident, sure that God was in his heaven, the Christian ethic his inspiration, and his “distant point” clearly before him. To the Cripps tradition, however, he had brought by marriage to Theresa Potter another, which, though similar in some important respects, was also different. Theresa Potter was also deeply religious, but interwoven with her non-sectarian Christianity was the personal and social idealism of the reformer and missionary. For the Potter family were essentially liberals, breaking through the conservatism of the countryside with the radicalism of town life.

The “Potters of Tadcaster” are a well-known family. Stafford Cripps’ maternal great-grandfather, Richard Potter, M.P., once came under criticism of Cobbett’s famous “Register”, which referred slightly to his social origin. Richard Potter retorted by summarising his father’s history. He said of him (John Potter, born 1728, died 1802):

“I never at any time denied that my Father was a draper at Tadcaster. He had a large family and they in succession managed his shop, his entire attention being devoted to a farm in the neighbourhood of the town. These facts are known to several merchants in Manchester who did business with my Father’s family. As a farmer my Father was excelled by few. When he took his farm the land was in a most wretched state; a great part of it being a rabbit warren. He introduced a new

system in that part of the country which was very successful. But there was another trait in my Father's character which Mr Cobbett's attack has brought to my mind, which I never think of but with honest pride; he was a steadfast and consistent friend of Freedom, abhorring Tyranny in all its acts, from the Despot on the throne, to the petty tyrant in the village. During the American War of Independence, when a deluded multitude illuminated for a victory over our American brethren, he would not allow his windows to glow with a light for the triumph of power over justice. The Populace broke down, and I am sure they might have pulled the house down before his independent spirit would have stooped to a compromise with his principles. At the commencement of the French war of 1793 against the Liberties of France and during its continuance, my Father never flinched from raising his voice in the humble and limited sphere in which he lived against this crusade against Liberty "

John Potter's great-granddaughter, Georgina Potter Meinertzhagen, wrote in her family memoir, *From Ploughshare to Parliament*, that in 1789 he

"took the farm of Wingate Hill near Tadcaster, and employed his large family of four boys and four girls at the farm and shop, both succeeding so well, that at his death he left a fortune of £12,000 to his family. The sons, as they grew up, went out into the world bent on making money in trade. The eldest son John got into debt and had to hide from his creditors for some years. He was eventually shipped off to America, and died there of yellow fever. . . .

"William, the second son, the Quaker, is to me one of the most interesting personages . . . This sage and energetic elder brother, 'Citizen Potter' must have been a remarkable man in his way. Sometimes he quite surpasses himself in his worldly wisdom, and one turns for relief to the simpler and more contented disposition of Richard. 'Always appear to be busy, even if you are not' 'Practice economy, with an appearance of generosity,' do not recommend themselves to us as very high-minded axioms. But then I can fancy William saying 'It is difficult for a poor man to be generous unless he is economical. the thrifless can seldom do you a good turn', and William, with all his eye to the main chance was ever ready to help brothers and sisters. 'It is the opinion of some people that the shopkeeping trade cannot be carried on without some little deviation from truth, but I am of a contrary sentiment. . . . for my part I have the sacred idea of the obligation between man and man. I should shudder as much at being detected in a lie as being detected in a depredation of property "

And then he adds somewhat hastily:

"I do not mean for a moment to inculcate a disregard for getting money."

Mrs. Meinertzhagen continues:

"As for honest, good Richard, with his soft heart, and keen enthusiasm for philanthropy and reform, his love of the land and outdoor life, he must have been a lovable creature. He was *of* the people and *for* the people; a thorough-going Radical, working hard all his life in the cause of reform, and who will now say that reform was not needed in those days? Reform in our Prisons and Penal Laws, in our Representation and Taxation

"As for Tom, he was quite as keen, but not so hot as Richard—a practical man of few words and less writing—and not so apt to be run away by his feelings . . ."

Thomas Potter became well-known for his championship of the abolition of slavery. He became the Mayor of Manchester in 1838 and was knighted on the occasion of the Queen's visit to that city in 1840. His son John succeeded him in the Town Council of Manchester and became the Mayor of the City also. He was knighted in 1851. While he was Mayor of Manchester he founded the first Free Lending Library in the world. A younger son Thomas Bailey Potter, became Member for Rochdale in 1865 and for thirty years was known in the House of Commons as "Principles Potter". Until his death in 1897 he was President of the Cobden Club.

Richard Potter, who became a prosperous Manchester manufacturer was, like his father, an unmistakable and "consistent friend of freedom, abhorring tyranny in all its acts". He had not only tiraded against the French war, but advocated justice for Ireland, went to considerable exertions to reduce some of the disgracefully heavy sentences for trifling offences which the courts at that time meted out to working-class delinquents, and became an enthusiastic adherent of the Anti-Slave Trade Campaign. During the Luddite Riots of 1812 he sympathised openly with the workers and went to London to oppose Lord Wharncliffe, "who was supposed to be rude and bullying, but we plucked up and let him know we did not care for him."

In 1832, on hearing of the Lords' rejection for the third time of the Reform Bill, Richard, together with John Fielden and John Shuttleworth, posted up to London at a few days' notice

with a petition signed by 24,000 people asking the House of Commons to "stop supplies" until the Lords gave way. The errand received enough publicity for the inhabitants of the towns on the way to turn out and cheer them vigorously. When the Bill was passed, Richard Potter was elected for Wigan in the first reformed Parliament and was a close friend of Cobden, Bright and Daniel O'Connell.

His namesake son, Richard, married the daughter of Lawrence Heyworth, M.P. Mrs. Potter gave him nine daughters and a son. The son died in infancy. One of the daughters was Beatrice, who later married Sidney Webb, and another was Theresa, the mother of Stafford Cripps.

Richard Potter, junior, appears to have resembled his father in outstanding ability and unusual charm of character. Margaret, one of his famous nine daughters, who married a well-known Liberal lawyer and politician, Henry Hobhouse, left the following sketch of him

"Handsome, determined-looking. Very strong, can travel night and day and spend whole days walking, driving and riding with slight fatigue at sixty-six years

"A man taking a large grasp of any subject and able to master details well. Great power of organising and governing men. Devoted to business. Fond of poetry. Affectionate, open-hearted, simple-minded to a peculiarity, and yet, when necessary, a most adroit diplomatist. Very unconventional, like his mother and children. Very sanguine, restless. Favourite pursuits, affairs, especially if requiring ingenuity and diplomacy. Very considerable originating powers for schemes of all sorts requiring patience and skill. Devoted to family life and his children. No art or music. A wonderfully versatile man, which adaptability to circumstances his children all inherit."

Richard junior graduated from the New London University, of which his father, a leading Unitarian, was one of the founders. He was called to the Bar, but did not practise long. He nursed his father through his last illness with much devotion, and, after his death, took to a life of leisure. It was while on a tour in Italy that he met Lawrencina Heyworth, in Rome. She was a highly-educated woman, unusually competent in languages, including Greek and Latin. After their marriage it was their intention to settle in Hertfordshire and live as rentiers. But Richard lost a considerable part of his fortune in the financial crisis of 1848 and was forced to go to work. Family loyalty came to the rescue.

His father-in-law, Lawrence Heyworth, secured him a directorship of the Great Western Railway, and a good friend of his schooldays, W. E. Price (grandfather of Mr. Philips Price, M.P., and famous correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*), offered him a partnership in a timber merchant's business at Gloucester. He became a big business man, lost all his interest in his father's and his own early associations with radicalism, and finally became a member of the Carlton Club.

Beatrice Potter Webb writes further of her father:

"In his struggle with the sins of the world and the flesh (he was never tempted by the devil of pride, cruelty or malice) he had two powerful aids—his wife and his God

" . . . The central article of his political faith was, indeed, a direct denial of democracy, an instinctive conviction, confirmed as he thought by his experience of American institutions, that the rulers of the country, whether Cabinet Ministers or judges, permanent heads of Government Departments or Members of Parliament, ought to be drawn from a leisured class—all the better if the property upon which the leisure depended was inherited property. The political and municipal corruption of the United States was, he maintained, due to the absence of an hereditary caste of leisured persons of standing .

" . . . he worshipped his wife, he admired and loved his daughters; he was the only man I ever knew who genuinely believed that women were superior to men, and acted as if he did, the paradoxical result being that all his nine daughters started life as anti-feminists! "

Herbert Spencer, after his first meeting with Richard Potter and his wife, wrote of him:

"Mr Potter commended my highest admiration. He is, I think, the most lovable being I have yet seen. He is evidently genuine. His amiability is not that of manner but of reality. He has a noble head—a democratic one of course, but one so beautifully balanced in other respects, that one can delight in contemplating it. The perfect agreement between his head and his face is remarkable: the features are Grecian and their expression is exactly what a phrenologist would anticipate.

"He is, I believe, very poetical—admires Shelley enthusiastically, and conceives him by far the finest poet of his age, in which I quite coincide with him. In fact we sympathised in our sentiments on all subjects on which we conversed, and although I might feel somewhat flattered by this, I must say I felt so strongly the beauty of his disposition as contrasted with my own, that I felt more dissatisfied with myself than I have done for a long time past."

Richard Potter and Herbert Spencer, meeting when Spencer was twenty-four years of age, remained life-long friends. But not a sentence of Herbert Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy* did Richard Potter ever read. He was completely indifferent to it, whether spoke or written. Beatrice, a close friend of Spencer's, even though he refused her permission to write his biography after her marriage to Sidney Webb, a socialist, writes of her father's attitude to Spencer.

"Always cheerfully beneficent, my father had a genuine if somewhat pitying affection for the philosopher on the hearth, he would walk with him, he would fish with him, he would give him sound advice and tell him tales from business life which illustrated this or that economic 'law' in which they both believed, but argue with him or read his books he would not. 'Won't work, my dear Spencer, won't work,' my father would say good-humouredly, when the professional doubter defiantly proclaimed his practice on a Sunday morning of deliberately walking against the tide of church-goers

"My father enjoyed intellectual society, he delighted in talks with Huxley, Tyndall, and James Martineau, and when his friend, James Anthony Froude, asked him on one or two occasions to join the afternoon walk with Thomas Carlyle, he did so in a spirit of reverential awe. . . . When I tried to interest him in the 'law of increasing heterogeneity and definiteness in structure and function' at work—so the philosophers demonstrated—throughout the universe, my father answered in this wise 'Words, my dear, words. Experience tells me that some businesses grow diverse and complicated, others get simple and more uniform, others again go into the Bankruptcy Court. In the long run and over the whole field there is no more reason for expecting one process rather than another. Spencer's intellect is like a machine racing along without any raw material, it is wearing out his body. Poor Spencer, he lacks instinct, my dear, he lacks instinct—you will discover that instinct is as important as intellect'. And then taking out his engagement book, he added in a more sympathetic tone: 'I must see whether I can't arrange another day's fishing with him—poor man.' " . . .

There may not be anything particularly remarkable about Richard Potter which sets him intellectually above the Victorian Christian lawyer business man of his day, but he did marry an exceptional woman, Lawrencina Heyworth, who was described by John Bright as "one of the two or three women a man remembers to the end of life as beautiful in expression and form "

Her daughter Beatrice describes her as a woman with:

"Soft hazel brown eyes, large and deeply set, veiled by overhanging

lids and long eyelashes set off by delicately curved and pencilled eye brows, eyes uniting in their light and shade the caress of sympathy with the quest of knowledge. To this outstanding beauty were added fine flossy hair, an easily flushed fair skin, small flashing teeth, a low musical voice, pretty gestures and long delicate hands, clearly a woman to charm, perhaps to inspire "

Beatrice also says, " . . . She had inherited from her father an iconoclastic intellect." She was ever questioning man's relation to the universe and the right conduct of life. She studied the Greek Testament assiduously, as she did also the Fathers of the Church, and was exemplary in her practice of religious rites.

Michel Chevalier, who, along with Mr Cobden, negotiated the Commercial Treaty with France in 1860 (quoted in Taine's *Notes on England*), writes of her after a visit to the Potters that he:

"discovered that the mistress of the house knew much more Greek than himself, apologised, and retired from the field . . . Note that this female Hellenist is a woman of the world and even stylish. Moreover, she has nine daughters, two nurses, two governesses, servants in proportion, a large well-appointed house, frequent and numerous visitors; throughout all this, perfect order, never noise or fuss, the machine appears to move of its own accord. These are fatherings of faculties and of contrasts which might make us reflect. In France we believe too readily that if a woman ceases to be a doll she ceases to be a woman."

Of how many women of her generation could it be said, as it was of her:

"She was an ardent student of Adam Smith, Malthus, and particularly of Nassau Senior, a disciple in the strictest sense of the Utilitarian economists. She was an individualist in relation to society, believing it to be the bounden duty of every citizen to climb upwards in society, better his social status and ignore those beneath him, aim steadily to the top rung of the ladder."

She never visited the servants' quarters, and seldom spoke to any servant other than her own maid. She acted by deputy, training each daughter to carry out "a carefully thought-out plan of the most economical supply of the best regulated demand". Her intellect told her that to pay more than the market rate, to exact fewer than the customary hours, or insist on less than the usual strain . . . was an act of self-indulgence,



a defiance of nature's laws which would bring disaster on the individual and the community.

But she could meet Herbert Spencer on his own ground and enter the realm of "words, words" Herbert Spencer recalls in his autobiography

"Mrs Potter was scarcely less argumentative than I was and occasionally our evening debates were carried on so long that Mr. Potter, often playing chiefly the role of listener, gave up in despair and went to bed, leaving us to continue our unsettleable controversies "

"Herbert Spencer," says Beatrice Webb, "was far and away the most intimate of the family friends, was always arguing with my mother on the origin of religion, deriding and denouncing ecclesiasticism and all its works; and I think it was he who brought into our circle of acquaintances Francis Galton and Sir Joseph Hocker, Huxley and Tyndall, whilst to Spencer's annual picnic George Henry Lewes and occasionally George Eliot "

In later years, however, when all the Potter daughters were adults and married, their mother became absorbed in lonely studies, especially of foreign languages and their grammars. It was a form of escapism. Unable to find an answer which her intellect could grasp to the contradiction between her mystical longings and her rationalised knowledge of the world, she "left the wise to wrangle and the riddle of the universe let be". She preferred to tackle a foreign language and its grammar, once smilingly assuring her daughter: "I shall know twelve languages before I die."

With such parents and in this Victorian home of culture, business and religion, surrounded by all the virtues of prosperity and hard work, grew Theresa, the sixth of the nine daughters of Richard and Lawrencina Potter. It was the practice of her father, when travelling abroad on his business trips, to take one or two of his daughters with him. His daughter Beatrice says this was to safeguard him from wicked associations. Be that as it may, he took his daughters Theresa and Margaret to America in the year 1872. In her letter to their Mother, as the trip drew to its close, Margaret wrote for herself and her sister, Theresa:

"This day week we start for home. Our American trip is almost finished

"If it were not for the delights of getting home again and being with you, dearest Mother, and the girls, I should be quite sorry to leave such an interesting country. I long to know more about it, with its great West,

its unexplored coalfields, and its inexhaustible supply of metals Theresa and I have determined, if we are alive then, to go for a second trip in about twenty years time. There will be such a wonderful change in everything, for the country is growing like wild-fire. I expect there will be complete communism by that time. You will have to drive your coachman and wait upon your servants, if you are foolish enough to have any. A freeborn Yankee would not degrade himself by service. Even the Irish, lately arrived from their native bogs, give themselves great ans, service for twice or three times the wage they would get at home.

"This is the great country for the workmen, and England for those who wish to enjoy their ease and wealth. If I were a labourer, I wouldn't stay one day in our poor little used-up country. But for the higher classes equality is not so pleasant."

In a fascinating memoir of his wife, Theresa Cripps, written shortly after her death in 1893, Charles Alfred Cripps quotes his sister-in-law Beatrice's description of Theresa, with whom she spent the winter of 1880 and the spring of 1881 in Italy.

Theresa

Was a born artist. That is, of course, apparent in her wonderful gift of expression, her power of seizing the really significant facts about a person or an event—a power which I imagine to be the essence of the artist's faculty. But it was also apparent in the intense pleasure that great works of art gave her. In Italy she was almost intoxicated with delight. For tenderness—tenderness of an exquisite character—was one of Theresa's most beautiful gifts. I remember in Rome when I was ill for five weeks, how she threw over all her sight-seeing to remain day after day in that dark room. I can see her now, moving about the room in the night, preparing poultices and drinks for me, always with the same gracious, loving cheering smile, absolutely forgetful of herself, and thinking only how she could give me rest and confidence. . ."

Later, Cripps quotes a letter from his then future wife to her father, Richard Potter, written while she was in Florence. Theresa writes.

"I cannot tell you what I think of Florence—or rather not think—but enjoy, because all this beauty and art, and quantness and picturesqueness, follow one upon the other so rapidly, and take such hold of the imagination and feeling, that just at first there is no motive or energy to do anything but simply to enjoy. This afternoon we spent at San Miniato, above the Gardens and if anything, the City was more golden

and more glorious It is indeed impossible to know what sunshine and colour are until one has been in Italy, all that I have seen in America of these pale in comparison No wonder that Italy gave birth and life to painting—how it came to die here I can't understand The pictures, here, my dear father, you will think me perfectly silly if I express my enthusiasm on the subject ”

Years after her death, her younger sister Margaret, who married Henry Hobhouse, wrote of her:

“She was a woman stately and kind, her hands stretched out to succour those who are sad

Fortune had led her footsteps through pleasant places,  
But she turned aside into the paths of misery to help the oppressed;  
Love lay in her eyes, tender care kept watch in her heart  
The angels held converse with her, and when death came, he appalled her not

Her name remains in my heart, a memory of joy  
Once I heard her voice from behind the veil,  
Radiance of golden warmth enveloped me,  
The voice said ‘God is love’—then silence  
And the cold glare of daily life closed in upon me.”

Another sister, Kate, wrote also.

“Theresa, our ox-eyed Juno, imperial butterfly, tall as Georgina and Blanche are . . . is still sentimental and full of interest, and . . . of skill at embroidering with gold what she's interested in; her geese are still swans and her spirit despite much illness, buoyant . . . ”

A short time after her return from Italy, Theresa Potter married Charles Alfred Cripps, as four years previously Cripps' eldest brother, William Harrison Cripps, who became senior surgeon at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, married Blanche Potter, an elder sister of Theresa. Charles Alfred Cripps' memoir to his children after his wife's sudden death gives a delightful description of the earnest, almost prayerful, approach of the parents and the lovers to what they regarded as the sacred act of the dedication of two lives to each other and the union of two families. Here is the characteristic paternal approval and religious sanctification of marriage by the best of the Christian Victorians. Cripps writes:

“ . . . On Friday, September 2nd, I went again to Standish. Your father and mother were there and also Uncle Willy and Aunt Blanche.

On Sunday Uncle Arthur, Aunt Mary and Cousin Bill came over from Longfords. I shall never forget a walk with your mother in the splendid autumn evening, or how we sat talking on Monday morning under the old oak tree in Standish garden. I left Standish on Monday, returning to Paimoor. On Thursday morning a short pencil note called me back to Standish, and in the afternoon the greatest blessing which the world can give, the devotion of a pure, noble-minded woman, had been promised to me.

"Mother appreciated to the full the solemn responsibilities involved in marriage. She did not decide without earnest and anxious consideration. Her father was our Galleotto, and wrote her the following letter on the Monday on which we had talked together under the old oak trees.

" 'Though I have divers weighty and anxious matters on my mind, there is nothing that more occupies my imagination and heart than the momentous question you have to decide. None of my children are nearer or dearer to me than you now, and ever since your infancy, and I often pray God that he may guide you right. My own judgement is clear that in Alfred Cripps you have . . . quite acceptable to me, and your mother, and all your sisters. But having disburthened myself of this, the one vital essential point remains for you, and you only, to decide. Marriage is the nearest of earthly ties, and is the type and symbol of the union above and beyond the considerations which weigh with me, demands a thorough personal preference and affinity, without which there is danger. You may trust Alfred Cripps' honour and sensibility in inviting him to come to Standish, on the clear understanding that the visit is designed to enable you without committing yourself in the smallest degree, to test your heart. Whatever you ultimately do, you may rely until death separates us, that you shall have the full affection and respect of your father and mother, and we shall be perfectly satisfied with your choice either way.'

"After Thursday mother could write to her father.

" 'I feel sure that his companionship through life will be one of the greatest blessings which could come to me.'

"And to her mother:

" 'It is impossible to write much on a subject on which one feels so much and I know, dear mother, you will be content at present with my full assurance that I expect to be happy . . . '

In October, 1881, Charles Alfred Cripps and Theresa Potter were married. He was at the beginning of his great professional career. They bought a house in London at Elm Park Gardens, (where Stafford was born seven and a half years later,) and lived there during the week while Parliament was sitting. between

times they resided at Parmoor, the permanent family residence of the Cripps'.

For years they lived the happiest of married lives. Theresa Cripps shared her husband's life to the full, participating in much social activity in the neighbourhood of her home. Her sister, Mrs. Arthur Playne, who lived at Longfords, near Minchinhampton, took a leading part in 1893 in promoting Cripps's selection as a candidate for the Stroud division constituency. When he became a candidate in the Stroud district, Theresa Cripps addressed meetings of the Stroud Women's Unionist Association. Children came quickly and Stafford was the fifth child and the fourth son of the marriage. Stafford was four years of age when his mother died.

Death came swiftly.

Of this catastrophe Cripps wrote:

"On a Sunday morning, we were walking together in the woods and gardens at Parmoor, on Sunday midday we were having luncheon together with the children, on Sunday afternoon we were told that there was no reason for the slightest anxiety, on Monday morning, the 22nd May, 1893, just before ten o'clock the end came, and my wife rested from illness and pain."

It would appear that Theresa Cripps had anticipated that death was on its way, for she left behind two papers, one addressed to her husband and one concerning the future of her children. These two documents reveal the woman in her entirety. To her husband she wrote:

"This paper, my darling husband, contains my will and wishes in case of death. Everything of every description (money, jewellery and possessions) I leave to my truest husband, wishing for his sake it were a thousand times more in value than it is. He will give some little memorial of me to those friends or relations who will really value it, and will give my likeness to all who ask for it. And it makes no difference to me, my own husband, where you bury my body because I will always be with you when you are near it or far away from it, in my own living spirit, if God will allow me, and surely he cannot separate such love as ours, even if he wills to separate our bodies and lives for a time. And I shall love to watch you working out all that is highest and noblest in your nature, that the world may be made better through it, and each night my spirit will unite with yours in prayer as it has done on earth, and we will seek God and truth together. You will teach my children to love only what is true, and ever to seek further truth, and make it known to others,

whatever career they choose. And your brave spirit, which has always helped me and loved me through dangers and difficulties will not grieve too much because we are parted, and if you can find another companionship where there can be the truest help and love between you, it is better you should marry; whom you can love, I shall love too. I write this not in fear of death, but knowing how near death may be, we all live in the midst and presence of it, and we should not fear it, it only means fuller life and temporary separation of our lives here, but not, I believe of our love or of our spirits. Your ever loving, ever grateful wife."

But the message is incomplete without the letter dealing with her children. Of them she said.

"I should like the children brought up as much as possible in the country, and to be educated much in the same style as their father was. I should like their living to be of the simplest, without reference to show or other follies. I should like them trained to be undogmatic and unsectarian Christians, charitable to all churches and sects studying the precepts and actions of Christ as their example, taking their religious inspiration directly from the spirit of the New Testament. I look upon Christ's words and the record of His life as we have it in the four Gospels, and the spirit of His faith as St. Paul preached it, as the great hope and light to guide mankind to the entrance of a vast spiritual existence . . . No quarrelling in money matters; I trust my children's sense of what is fair and right. I implore my children to stand by one another through thick and thin, in joy, sorrow, success or failure, or even disgrace, and to choose Christ as their sole Hero and Master."

So beautiful Theresa Cripps, mother of Stafford, left her beloved family closely knit by a deep family affection, dedicated to a vision of personal life belonging to the culture of a period already beginning to disintegrate; of the disintegration, none within the family and few within the nation were yet wholly conscious. Stafford's father shared the dream of his wife Theresa, as completely as if it were his own; indeed, it was his own with all its fantasy, its ethics, and its insularity from the world at large. Its material foundations were in the county family with its roots running deep and far through many generations of successful lawyers and bankers, enjoying rich incomes and the commercial success of men of property.

That skilful, though frequently mistaken, delineator, Beatrice, describes a visit to Parmoor, the Christmas after the death of her sister. She wrote:

"Alfred's home is strangely attractive—with a dash of sadness in it—especially to Theresa's sisters. A charming house, designed largely by Theresa. The soft luxurious covering, the quaintness of the furniture, the walls covered with her portraits, all bring back to me the memory of her gracious personality, so full of sympathy, with a vivid imagination. Alfred himself has regained all the light-heartedness of his charming disposition. Possibly it is the rebound from the sadness of his most intimate thoughts, but to the mere spectator he seems more light-hearted than of old. He is again the young man—unattached—absolute master of his own life. And he is in the full tide of prosperity. An enormous professional income (he told Arthur that he made £1,000 a week during the Session) has enabled him to buy the family estate and sit down in front of a promising constituency. Doubtless he sees before him a brilliant career. Dear old Father used to call him 'the little jewel of an advocate'—a term which just fits him. With this disposition he could hardly be a reformer. He has become of late years more and more Conservative opportunist—bent on keeping the soft places of the world for his own class—but ready to compromise and deal whenever his class would lose more by fighting. He has almost a constitutional dislike of economic or social principles. I doubt whether Alfred ever thinks out an economic or political problem. Why should he? He knows on which side he is retained, and there will be time enough to get up the advocate's fact when the question turns up. . . "

Charles Alfred's aged father did not subscribe to this view of his son's conservatism. The elder Cripps claimed that "his son Alfred had been an exceedingly good Liberal all his life, and had only been stirred up by the great crisis of Home Rule". Alfred himself says that while he was at Oxford he accepted the economic teachings of Ricardo and Mill and.

"I found it a serious handicap to question this teaching and not to regard it as practically of a sacrosanct character. When I went to London I was elected a member of the Reform Club, and classed as a left-wing Liberal. A free trader in principle, I was never convinced that there were quasi-mechanical rules which could generally be relied upon to regulate demand and supply, and as incidental thereto the question of employment and unemployment. . . "

It would appear that Beatrice Webb was not quite as objective in her estimate of Alfred's political outlook as she might have been (she subsequently revised her views), and that his conservatism was not so deeply entrenched as she estimated.

Certainly, in 1892, Cripps was a long way from becoming a Socialist. Indeed, when he heard of Beatrice Potter's engagement to Sidney Webb, he wrote in his diary:

"On Friday, January 8th, I just heard Beatrice has become engaged to Mr Sidney Webb I do not know him or what is his character I hope it may be for the best but can at present form no opinion of any kind Mr Webb is known as a writer on Socialism and in this respect his opinions are totally opposed to mine"

Nevertheless, weak or strong as his conservatism may have been, it is true to say that he was oblivious to the social process which was disintegrating the foundations of the Crippsian tradition of enlightened patronage of the lower orders with its heavenly immortalism and individual sanctification by love and earthly economic success. As sure as the England of Sire Crispe de Stanlake ushered in the age of Magna Charta, and the England of Joseph Cripps of Cirencester saw the Industrial Revolution reshape the entire economic and social life of the country, Charles Alfred Cripps had arrived and grew to full manhood in the years which saw the beginning of the eclipse of the "Workshop of the World" and the rise of a new social power that would never be content with the benevolence of the county gentleman. Such a way of life had been good, while it lasted, for all those who had been born to "give orders". Cripps continued to live its practice and dream its dreams, however, although occasionally the evidence of the changing times came into his home people with ideas heralding the new age which was so near.

There came Henry Hobhouse, a lawyer who became an Ecclesiastical Commissioner for England and Member of Parliament for Somerset, who had married Theresa's sister, Margaret Potter; Leonard Courtney, a lawyer and professor of political economy, who had married another of the famous sisters; and Beatrice and Sidney Webb, all discussing the "condition of the people" and striving to "bridge the gulf between the classes" when the Christian conscience was shocked by what had been revealed of the lives of millions in the industrial towns and cities of England.

Before her marriage to Charles Alfred Cripps, Theresa Potter had spent some months in the East End of London, performing for a time the social work carried on by her elder sister Kate, afterwards Lady Courtney. This brought her, and later her husband, into close connection with Mr. Charles Booth, the author



of the monumental study, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, who had also married Mary Macauley, a cousin of Theresa's.

"Very interesting people," Alfred thought. But what real impact could they make on him? His life was regular, comfortable and rich. Unaffected by the booms and slumps of industry, he felt as stable as his home.

Industrial England, however, had changed almost beyond recognition. A distant voice on the Potter side of the family could testify to its coming. For had not Richard Potter senior, the prosperous manufacturer, like his father before him, been a "consistent friend of freedom, abhorring tyranny in all its acts"? Why, this man championed the new rising class of industrial workers at the dawn of the century. During the Luddite riots in 1812, he openly sympathised with them and went to London to oppose the Manchester Police Bill. From that same class there came Robert Owen, Frances Place, and Joseph Hume, all of whom did so much among the new industrial workers, created by the Industrial Revolution, to foster the development of Trade Unionism. The first great political awakening of the new industrial working-class, signified in the rise of Chartism, had come and died away. But the new class differentiation remained and the gulf between the middle-class and the working-class became deeper and wider, so that the millions were known as "the people of the abyss".

Then, once again, the social conscience of the men and women of the middle-classes was stirred and they sought to bridge the gulf. They cried aloud to heaven of their discoveries. Friedrich Engels, a manufacturer, mill owner in Manchester, published what he saw of the "Conditions of the Working-Class of England in 1844". Oastler, Shaftesbury and Chadwick, the philanthropists and reformers, campaigned the country. Dickens, Carlyle, Ruskin and William Morris, artists and writers, penned what they saw, indignantly protested and conjured visions of a new society; John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx analysed the economics of the time and their works began a new understanding of social history, Charles Kingslev, F. D. Maurice, General Booth and Cardinal Manning, each in his own way, blazed a trail of Christian indignation that such "regions of inequity" could exist in great districts of industrial England. There abounded, too, a class-consciousness of sin, as the social cess-pools were revealed. Arnold Toynbee, in the years of Alfred Cripps' young manhood, expressed this most pathetically in the following appeal:

"We—the middle classes, I mean, not merely the very rich—we have neglected you, instead of justice we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy we have offered you hard and unreal advice, but I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us, I think that many of us would spend our lives in your service. You have—I say it clearly and advisedly—you have to forgive us, for we have wronged you, we have sinned against you grievously—not knowingly always, but still we have sinned, and let us confess it; but if you will forgive us—nay, whether you will forgive us or not—we will serve you, we will devote our lives to your service, and we cannot do more. We will do this and only ask you to remember one thing in return. If, that is, you get your material civilisation, remember that it is not an end in itself. Remember that man, like trees and plants, has his roots in the earth, but like the trees and plants, he must grow upwards towards the heavens. If you will only keep to the love of your fellowmen and to great ideas, then we shall find happiness in helping you; but if you do not, then our reparation will be in vain."

At the turn of the century, university graduates like Clement Attlee went to live in settlements amidst "the masses", to "bridge the gulf", to investigate, to reform. The Potters and like-minded members of the same class brushed to one side the charitable flow of sentiment and cash into dark places; they wanted to know why these conditions should prevail and how a fundamental change in the nature and character of all society could be brought about. Beatrice Potter found her partner, Sidney Webb, together they began tremendous investigations into the workings of the institutions which handled the problems produced by poverty and the social welfare of the working population—"English Local Government" and "English Poor Law History". The Webbs went on to examine the organisations which the new social class, produced by the industrial revolution, had itself created to fight poverty and the forces which created poverty, in such works as the *History of Trade Unionism in Britain* and the *History of the Co-operative Movement*.

A new political awakening had begun which would soon sweep like an avalanche through the land. In the very year that Stafford Cripps was born, 1889, the Second International Working-men's Association was formed. Recently founded Socialist organisations, the Social Democratic Federation, led by the middle-class disciple of Karl Marx, H. M. Hyndman, the Fabian Society, led by Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw, and the Trades Union Congress, were all represented. The year

was memorable for events which signalled the beginning of the organisation of general labour as distinct from the organisation of skilled workers which had characterised Trade Unionism hitherto. When Tom Mann, John Burns, Will Thorne, all skilled workers, and members of the skilled unions, joined with Ben Tillett of the dockers to lead the famous Dock Strike and the strike of the gas workers, it meant that the "People of the Abyss" were on the move from the demoralised poverty-stricken regions of social darkness, and were organising big battalions of a working-class movement to strive towards a new society. In that year, too, the *Fabian Essays* were published, they revealed to all and sundry that the Fabian Society, the organisation of the intelligentsia of Britain, had begun its work armed with a theory which damned the existing order of society as morally indefensible and technically inefficient. The Fabians aimed to transform society by the rational conversion of the efficient middle-class administrators: to awaken the political consciousness of the working-class and bring them under the tutelage and leadership of the Fabians. These adumbrations of class organisation and movement had broken through the franchise limitations set by the Reform Act of 1832, called forth compulsory free education, shortened the working day, and invoked much factory legislation, there was indeed an assemblage of forces for a grand march against the domains of power and privilege of the people of property. All these developments claimed no thought in the mind of Charles Alfred Cripps or of his household during that period in which Stafford was born.

Nor can it be said that the head of the house, or anyone within it, was conscious of the fact that Britain's place in world affairs was no longer that of undisputed master. Although the year 1889 saw England in the midst of her imperial expansion in the continent of Africa, her power relations with other nations and empires were no longer as before. Up to 1860, Britain had been the leading industrial country, with France a poor second. She was still the leader in 1870, with the U.S.A. a good second. By 1880 the United States was ahead. By 1889 she was far ahead, with Germany on her tail; in less than another decade Germany took second place behind America, with Britain third. True, Britain's navy continued to sail the seven seas, supreme, enjoying a two-to-one ratio of strength over any other two powers, but her potentials of armed power had been surpassed and the power arena was becoming congested.

Nor were the changes in the power structure of society peculiar to England. In every case where the industrial revolution had got into its stride, by its nature it produced two classes. The first of these, industrial capitalists, superseded the power of the landed gentry, while the other, composed of industrial workers, roused itself to organise with an eye on some great to-morrow witness the organisation of the Second International Working-men's Association in 1889. The outlines of the future in these lower strata of society were discernible for those with eyes to see. In 1861 the landed aristocracy of Russia was forced to abolish serfdom. In 1875 the first Russian Workers' Union was formed. At the same time that the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation were founded in England, the "Emancipation of Labour Group" was formed by Plekhanov in St. Petersburg. And when Bismarck's Germany battered the French army in 1870 the Paris Commune of Workers hung for a few short weeks like a red star on the horizon of Europe, as if heralding a new age.

But the shape of things to come between the powers dominating the nations of the world became quickly discernible, too, as England's industrial supremacy passed into eclipse. In 1884 the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy was signed and Germany participated in the carve-up of Africa. In 1885 the German East Africa Company was formed. Almost simultaneously the British East Africa Company was established. In 1889 the Franco-Russian Entente came into being and was soon to blossom into the Franco-Russian Treaty.

So Stafford was born in a home on an estate that was well-to-do, in a regime which to all within the home seemed as stable as the hills around them. He was born to parents steeped in the Christian tradition of personal salvation through service to one's neighbour close at hand. Their earthly horizons were extremely limited while their heavenly horizons ranged into life eternal. The death of his mother in his fifth year was a sad loss to Stafford, but so great was the impress of her personality upon her family, and so deeply integrated was it with the religious patriarchal tradition of generations of Cripps' and Potters, that she would live on in the lives of her children as a powerful dedicatory influence through all their days. In none would this be more manifest than in her youngest child, Stafford. For her husband, Charles Alfred Cripps, yet to break through his political insularity and feel the impact of the social and historical forces which were passing him by, was for a long time to live

intimately with the memory of his lost wife. He was the missionary of her messages to their children. Such was the background and environment into which Richard Stafford Cripps was born in 1889 and left motherless in 1893

## CHAPTER 2

### STAFFORD'S FORMATIVE YEARS

PROBABLY no man ever held more firmly to the Christian doctrine of personal immortality than did Charles Alfred Cripps. Death, he believed, was the entrance to a larger life and when his wife Theresa died, so vivid was his memory of her and so completely had her personality pervaded their home that her continued presence and communion became very real to him. He was a good father who loved all his children dearly. He was intimate with all of them and would be an abiding influence in their lives.

This applied especially to "the baby" of the family, who, by the time he was three years of age, everyone recognised "would be the cleverest of the family".

Indeed, even earlier than this, his mother had the idea that her "baby Stafford" would prove to be exceptional. For there is a remarkable paragraph in Charles Alfred Cripps' diary of June 4th, 1890, when Stafford was not yet fifteen months old. He wrote:

"Baby does not sleep well, but his mother thinks he has too great brain development, and looks to him as the rising genius among her boys."

When Stafford was born there came to Parmoor as governess not only the only daughter, Ruth, a gentle little lady of fifty years of age, a Miss Mary Marshall, whom everyone called "Mazelle". She had spent most of her life in France and brought back with her to England such a vivacious spirit, combined with a generous unselfishness, that she was more of a companion of the children than a self-government and direction than a representative of parental authority. This was a wise and fortunate appointment, for no woman was better qualified to co-operate with Charles Alfred Cripps in keeping the memory of his wife fresh and bright in the minds of his children and to inculcate by example his own religious and ethical code.

Cripps' legal and political activities held him in London during the week and enabled him to return home to Parmoor

only at the week-ends. But that did not mean he forgot his family for five days a week and remembered them for two. It simply meant more work for the postman and very frequent letter-writing between him and the children, from the youngest upward. However short the letters, they breathed the deep affection and loyalty of the family one to the other. There are still extant some little letters from Stafford written in these very early years. The very first one, written at the age of four to his mother, reads

"DEAR MOTHER,

"I love you about two hundred pounds I send you a cowslip bell  
Franky and Dora came to play with us yesterday

"Ta-ra-boom-de-hay!"

"Love Kisses

"STAFFORD "

Stafford's first letter to his father, written shortly after his Mother's death, follows

"DEAR FATHER,

"I love you very much Best kisses to dear loving Father I like and  
love dear Mother very much

"Lots of love from Staffie "

The elder Cripps replies to his child on June 12th, 1893:

"MY DEAR DEAR LITTLE STAFFORD,

"I am writing to you in the evening just when I think you are saying your prayers and thinking of dear dear Mother. You will never forget her if you ask her spirit to help you and to come quite near to you whenever you want love and help Mother's one wish was to give love and help to all who wanted help and love, and she often told me that she wanted her boys to think how much sorrow they could save to others, by being always kind and thoughtful . I have often told Mother that her boys would grow up to love her more, and that if they loved her, they would be good and great—now Mother cannot talk to you every day, but the more you think of her, the nearer will she be to all of us. Only Pater can be with you and you must always help Pater to teach you just as Mother wished to teach you I can only tell you a little at a time how Mother loved you She would have gone through any grief or sorrow if only to help you to be good and kind She wished you to grow up loving Jesus and you must come to Pater whenever he can help his dear little Stafford

"Your very loving Father,"

An instant reply

"DEAR PATER,

"I love you very very very very much all the best is kisses to pater  
"STAFFORD"

A Miss Grant was commissioned to paint a remembrance portrait of Theresa Potter with Stafford seated on her lap.

Anticipating the tedium of posing, Alfred Cripps wrote to his son

"I hope Staff is a very good boy It is such a treat for him to be in Mother's picture—Pater remembers how often he saw you sitting in Mother's lap, just as you will be sitting in the picture Mother always said that she could quite trust Staffie and laughed at Pater when he said that Staffie wanted someone to look after him. I wish I could be more with you all; but we shall have a beautiful holiday together, and we can try and do each day just what we knew Mother would like"

Three months after his mother's death, Stafford was taken to the home of his aunt, Mary Playne, at Longfords, Minchinhampton, where he spent many happy days. Remembering his aunt and Longfords, Stafford Cripps relates that "Mrs. Playne played a tremendous part in my life She more or less adopted me directly my mother died. She was a most brilliant woman and most like my mother in character. I spent a great deal of my holidays there—every summer. After Isobel and I were married we went there too. I regarded Longfords as my second home My Aunt Mary had one boy very much older than myself. I was page at his wedding. I was about four or five at the time. I remember afterwards going to Harrods to choose my present. It was a knife I still have it."

Longfords was a big estate with large lawns and a sloping park outside the house. On that slope annual flower shows and giant teas were held. The annual festivities included such features as merry-go-rounds and swing-boats, which brought joy to Stafford and other youngsters.

These garden parties also brought the entire family together. Among the guests were Stafford's aunt and uncle, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, Mrs. Webb also being Mrs. Playne's sister. Stafford recounts of Mrs. Webb that "although she was my god-mother, I never came close to her as a child—she was rather a terrifying person, so obviously interested in the intellectual development of the grown boys of the family that she did not



attract young children. It was not until I really grew up that I came into close contact with her "

Writing of this period, Leonard Cripps, the third of Charles Alfred Cripps' four sons, says that Stafford

"was the darling of the gods—that is, of our nurse and governesses. Others of us may have felt neglected while our little infant brother absorbed the spotlight and began to create a sort of controlling interest in our nursery. Stafford's wisecracks and judgement in his very early childhood were achieved with great care and solemnity and obtained for him the nickname of Dad, which has stuck to him ever since. I can remember aunts and uncles who were vastly amused at our small Solomon, and who all agreed that he would at least finish up as Lord Chancellor. He often admitted to me that that was his real intention in life "

Stafford admits in conversation that he always knew he was going to be a lawyer, for he was trained in the technique of advocacy at a very early age. When his father would come home for week-ends, he would give his sons legal briefs, tied in red string, for which Alfred Cripps, Q.C., would pay them the sum of one shilling and a penny. Thus they were inspired to write briefs on such subjects as pantry filching, insubordination, games rules and the like, while this technique served to inform the elder Cripps of his four sons' and daughter's activities of the week, its purpose was also to promote the character development of the children.

Leonard Cripps reveals that.

"Stafford recognised the necessity of getting to work at an early age to earn a living. With us, he started, when very young, three independent businesses.

"In the first instance, a small café was established in the little room next to the bathroom, where tea and light refreshments were served on Saturdays and Sundays to enable my father's guests to purchase their tea instead of enjoying it in the drawing room fire.

"The second business was market gardening. We had, some mile or so from the house, a small allotment which was not in use, and so was given to us to produce vegetables, which were purchased from us by the house.

"The third business was only going in summer holidays. It consisted of collecting rakings and gleanings from the cornfields and dumping them into an old barn by means of our donkey and cart, which Stafford, being the baby, invariably drove.

"At the end of the harvest our bailiff took the contents of the barn over at an agreed price

"It was a bad week when the profits fell below a shilling or two on the combined businesses

"The truth of the matter was that Stafford's moral education was so strong in him that he could never tolerate doing nothing "

His sister, Ruth, now Lady Egerton, reminiscing about life at Parmoor and her brother Stafford when he was a youngster, says

"At Parmoor, the children lived a life all their own After the death of my mother, my father did not want aunts to come to Parmoor, he wanted the children to grow freely, and was, in a sense, a radical in this matter, as he did not want a chaperone in the house My father did not believe in intensive education He himself believed that he was over-worked at school He wanted his children to take responsibility Stafford in those days was very independent and sure of himself This may be ascribed to my father's tendency to treat children as adults As a result Stafford never shirks taking responsibilities "

For a short time Stafford was sent to St. David's School at Reigate. He found it an ordeal at first but very soon he wrote to his father:

"DEAR PATER,

"This week I am one from the top and there are four in the form Next week there will be five in the form and I expect I shall be third This week I have beaten the boy below me by 11 marks. Next holidays I must go and stay with Mr Sutton's boy in London because I promised to. I got my Kodak and am sending two films to Eastmans. Please can you send me some films for it if you can, from any photographers. Mr Marsh if you can. I liked the knife very much the one you asked Fred to give me. Best love from,

"DAD"

Another letter indicates that he does not remain for long in the second position

". . . This week I am top by 50 marks I got full for everything except neatness, and in that I got 15 out of 20 It is awful I can say I got full for everything *except* neatness. Last written lesson I got V G. for the first time—that means very good."

Stafford's conscience would not tolerate that blot on his record.

Boarding schools run on a three terms a year basis with fairly long holidays in between. These the children usually spent at Parmoor, where they had a daily "lesson hour" with their tutor, a Mr Elwell, and for the rest of the day were free to follow their own inclinations. Stafford's favourite exercise was riding. Fishing, shooting, hunting were tame sports for him compared with galloping across the open country on a pony.

Nevertheless the escapades and the riding were not enough for Stafford. There was nothing he liked better than to be making things. He liked using tools, learned to make fretwork brackets, to build boats, construct all kinds of things. Here is a letter he wrote in 1897, at the age of eight years, to his father, who was in London, to tell him all his news:

"DEAR FATHER,

"I hope you are none the wiser for your journey . . . We are awfully jolly here. Len, Tommy and I have a carpenter's shop and we also make fretwork brackets. Yesterday I had a race with Mr Elwell it was awful fun we fair galloped for all we could go and Nipper (whom you must thank Uncle for) beat Eighteen by about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lengths and I could hardly pull him up for about 150 yards. We raced across the moor and common to the first lot of firs. Poor old Nipper runs up and down all the ditches he never attempts to jump. It is awfully dull without you and Ruth.

. . . It is awfully kind of you to send that letter to me. Our garden prospers greatly in the sun and rain, yesterday it was a beautiful day and so it is this morning . . . I am now reading *Short History of the English People*. It is much nicer than that dry tripe of Sir Henry Havelock. Sir H. H. is all the names of the musses and Pa's tutors etc—and their addresses why he was at one school and not at another and how he liked them, oh gracious all rot and bunkum you might call it. I am a subscriber to a home now at ten shillings a year but they think that I am Mrs Cripps and not Master Cripps. . . .

"We are all going to make a boat to-day, a good one too, one that will hold you sitting down and in ordinary clothes not change I hope it acts if it does not we shall be angry. Well that is all I know so I say goodbye. With best wishes,

"DADIALISSIMUS."

Before his father could come home to see the results of the boat-building he wrote to him again. And this time we can see the lawyer mind emerging as he analyses a little incident of the day. He says:

"DEAR PATER,

"I suppose you have heard all about the boat. I went in it yesterday it is awful fun. They have built another wall and are going to run the bottom with clay very soon. The deepest side is about 1ft. 6 ins. in the shallowest part, in the deepest about 2ft. Yesterday I decided to go for a ride with Edmund. But just as he was starting there was an accident with one of his carts and he had to wait and see what damage had been done and then he forgot what time he arranged to meet me at the bottom of Chisburch Hill (it was  $\frac{1}{4}$  past two really) and at about 20 past two he started from the moor to meet me at Chisburch now for my side of the question I started from here at 10 to two, trotted to the bottom of the hill, at least I biked and the men rode nipper down there as I was passing keenes at the top I heard the two o'clock bell going and when I reached the bottom they said it was half past two which of course was rather silly as it could not be true. It must have been just about 5 minutes past two I waited there a very long time and again asked the time they said 3 o'clock and said they knew he had passed some time before we came which must have been an untruth on their part as he did not start until twenty minutes past two so I am going to see the truth today. That is all to say best love from,

"DAD "

"Give love to Aunt Mary "

A story has got around that Stafford built bridges in his holidays at this time. He will not have it. He says:

"We never built a bridge anywhere. There was a big concrete tank built at the bottom of the garden filled with water for fire prevention, as there were only deep wells. In this tank there was a split in the concrete across the middle, and that was where the bridge was formed. We kept two alligators there—they were about six or eight feet long. My brother Fred, was responsible for things like that. He obtained them by answering an advertisement in the newspaper. The alligators lasted out through the summer. In the winter they were put into the Grape House, where there was a little tank and hot water pipes. Then they sat on the pipes and died."

So the holidays passed and back to school Stafford had to go. But he fell ill between terms. First he caught the measles and shortly thereafter followed pneumonia. Stafford was a sick boy for a time and he relates with humour that "there was a death bed scene but no death." Beatrice Webb comments in her posthumous volume *Our Partnership* that Stafford's period at home had made "Daddy more exuberant than ever". Stafford's

precocity prompted his father to send him to a different school from that attended by his brothers. To avoid family embarrassment, which no doubt would have occurred had he gone to the same school and forged ahead of his brothers, he was sent at eight years of age to a boarding school at Rottingdean on the Sussex coast.

At Rottingdean, young Stafford's loneliness was tempered by letters from his brothers and sister, Ruth.

His brother Leonard wrote from St. David's at Reigate and his other brothers, Seddon and Frederick, from Winchester. Ruth writes to tell him that she "was so glad to hear how well you had your teeth out" and from the irrepressible Fred, ill with influenza in London, comes word that "I have seen 3 doctors here, one says I have got a trill in my heart, another says I have a thrill in my heart, the other says about the same."

Alfred Cripps continued to write to his son. A note to Stafford, now ten years of age, written on September 14th, 1899, reads as follows.

"Parmoor,

"Sept. 14—99

MY DEAR DEAR STAFF,

"I am sitting down, just after you have gone, to write to you so that you my son have a letter after getting back to school. I shall miss you so but we must be brave and I shall very soon come to see you.

"I am sure that you will not be unhappy when once you begin your work and football and remember that Father's love and Mother's spirit are always quite near to you guarding and loving you.

"I shall not say goodbye because I am never really away from you.

"Your dear old Pater,

"CAC."

Next day "the little lady from the big house" (Mazelle) followed with another epistle, revealing how completely she blended with the family and aided the spiritual guidance of the youngest especially. She wrote:

"Parmoor,

"Sept. 15th, 99

"It is just seven o'clock, my dear, dear old Dad, and I am wishing I could have a peep at you now!

"I hope you have as bright a morning as we have here, though the sunshine does not seem as bright as it did when you were here. We all missed you dreadfully yesterday and Pater was not at all merry at

dinner He was wondering what 'dear little Dad' was doing then and we were all wishing so much you were here with us But if it were always the holidays you could never get wise enough to be a barrister, could you, dear old man

"In a few days we shall all be hard at work again, and we must try to do our work well and earn another good holiday at Christmas—it will *soon* be here! and then hurrah for Parmoor and a happy, happy time together! Margaret said her head was quite well yesterday and did not ache at all

"We were glad to hear that you met Ivor at Victoria, and got into a carriage along with him. You will both enjoy talking of Parmoor now he has been here I do hope you will help each other to be brave, kind and busy boys—just what dear Father and Mother want you to be

"I love to think that when you are far from those you love best, there is One near you and loves you even better than we *can* love If you think He your *Father* in Heaven, is always watching over you, my darling, that He will always *help* you, in your work and in your play, you will be able to get over all difficulties, and will be always glad to feel that He is near—and that He sees you and helps you And you will come to understand how very, very much 'Our Father' loves you and that will be indeed a strength and joy to you dear, dearest Dad "

At twelve years of age Stafford was sent to Winchester College, whose rooms and grounds had felt the impact of many Crippsian footsteps. His first year was full of hard work in Chernocke House. He looked after the clothes of Duggie Udal, captain of the House, and one of his tasks, as of his father before him, was to make tea for the prefects. One of his first letters to his father from Winchester complained of his difficulties; it also brought Stafford's wishes that his father emerge victorious in a Parliamentary election he was contesting.

"DEAR PATER,

"I have not much to say except 1st I hope you will easily get in without much trouble 2nd to tell you that my work is very hard to me and I am trying to do my best yet I get sworn at like anything for being lazy etc. I cannot do more than a certain Standard but I am expected to do work as well as chaps who are above me "

Quickly he advanced from the "Junior Juniors" until at sixteen he was the youngest member of the top form. He was house prefect and captain of Winchester House VI football team. Fellow house and team-mates were A. P. Herbert, to become famous in later years as a writer, Horace Woodhouse,

who became Lord Terrington and was for a brief period in 1911 a lawyer in Chambers with Stafford, and Richard Coit, a cousin. Lord Terrington relates that Stafford, at Winchester, regarded him "as a 'dangerous radical' because my father was a Liberal M.P. while Stafford's father was a Conservative!"

While Stafford was in these days a young Conservative gentleman, "bon vivant" according to some reports, Terrington relates that the sight of a poor, begging woman, just as Stafford and he were about to enter a restaurant, caused Stafford to turn to him and remark that his dinner was spoiled by that sight. In conversation with the author, Lord Terrington added, with obvious relish at the memory, that the first alcoholic drink he ever tasted was as Stafford's guest at the "Green Man", a popular public-house in Winchester, and that all the Cripps boys were regarded with awe because their father should permit his sons to entertain at the Royal Hotel. The elder Cripps loved and trusted his sons and always took the view that his children "should choose their own way".

Sports occupied Stafford considerably at Winchester. He preferred racquets to cricket. Above every other sport he retained his love for riding. There was no opportunity for riding during term-time at Winchester College. So he bought a bicycle at a most convenient time—just as he was sixteen years of age. Corresponding regularly with his father he wrote:

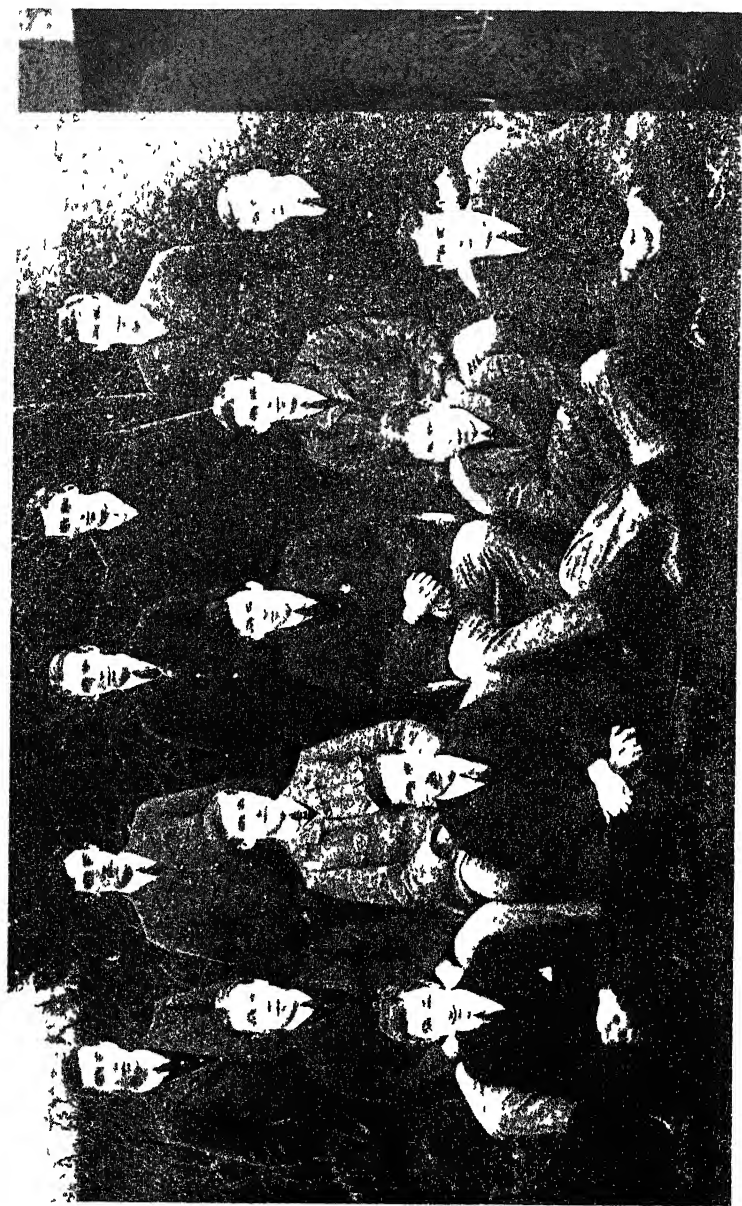
"You know that you never gave me a birthday present. Well, I thought that as I have just bought a bike which cost £8 10. 0d. you would like to give it me. If you would you can send a cheque for £8 10 0 I invested in the Derby, but came out 3s 6d. to the bad, as I had an investment on Flotsam "

But even in those days his energy and his interests were extraordinary. From the age of sixteen he specialised in science. While at Winchester he also gave some time to modern languages and English literature. After he was fourteen he spent many of his holidays on the continent wandering either alone or with friends. During one holiday at Parmoor he produced what his brothers dubbed as "Stafford's Folly". Inspired by the example of the Wright brothers he determined to build a biplane glider and fly it. In due course he completed its construction, an old carriage pulled the glider to the top of the neighbouring hill on a day perfect for the experiment. Stafford was to be pilot as well as the engineer, but it came rapidly to grief. There is a note in Lord Parmoor's diary of October 20th, 1909, which says:



STAFFORD IN FANCY DRESS



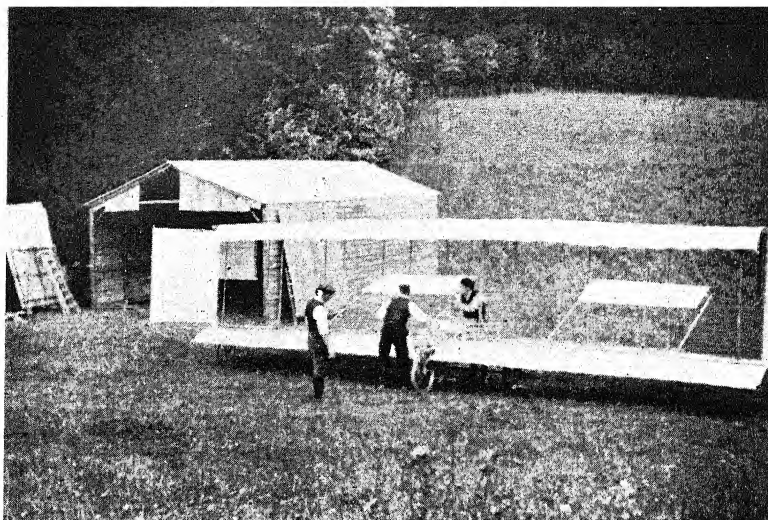


WINCHESTER "HOUSES XV, 1907"

WITH STAFFORD, HEAD OF THE HOUSE, (*in centre*). NOTE A P HERBERT, FRONT ROW, LEFT



STAFFORD AND HIS BRIDE, ISOBEL, JULY 12, 1911



STAFFORD CONSTRUCTING HIS GLIDER, AT PARMOOR, 1909



BEFORE LEAVING FOR BOULOGNE,  
1914



WITH ISOBEL AND THEIR FIRST CHILD,  
JOHN, 1913

"Stafford has been busy constructing an air plane. It took much time. It was broken to a certain extent on the first trial and he is now mending it." That ended the experiment but not his interest in aeronautics and engineering. He had a business mind, too, and what could he do better than at sixteen become a director of his father's local newspaper known as the *South Bucks Standard*? For the next five years he was in complete charge of the financial side of the paper. The politics of the paper didn't interest him in the least: it was "father's". The technical and business side of the affair appealed to his active mind. He ever wanted to know how things were done and then to do them. His curiosity in this respect was unbounded.

At eighteen, Stafford, specialising in chemistry, won the first chemistry scholarship ever offered at New College, Oxford. The examiners were so impressed by the quality of his answers to their questions that they sent the papers to Sir William Ramsay, at University College, London. Sir William himself so appreciated Stafford's work that he suggested he should go to University College and work under him.

Stafford's science master at Winchester, W. B. Croft, was very proud of him. Writing to Charles Alfred Cripps, he says that Stafford

"has been working in the right way, his eye fixed not always on the prize but usually a little beyond that, entering into the love and enthusiasm for the subject which belongs to it. Without this feeling school exercises are often an injury to the mind . . . The examiners spoke with enthusiasm about your son's work. I should like also to commend his habits of readiness and punctuality which quietly add to the power of good abilities."

Dr. Burge, headmaster of Winchester, was not only proud of this success but had become very fond of Stafford in the course of his closer association with him during the final year at Winchester. He wrote to Stafford's father:

"MY DEAR MR CRIPPS,

"I write at once to rejoice with you in your son's success, which he thoroughly deserves, and also his promise. I can only say that I told the Warden of New College he is a fellow of *quite* first rate ability. But better than all that, he is a fellow of real high purpose and genuine appreciation—I respect and like him very much.

"With all good wishes, I am yours very sincerely,

"H. M. BURGE"

Mr. Furley, Cripps' housemaster at Winchester, remembering Stafford many years later, has remarked that

"critics of Stafford have often complained about his lack of training in the humanities. Stafford was a good student of history and there he earned some of his best grades. He studied Latin and Greek until he was fifteen and had to take examinations in those subjects when he took his scholarship examination at New College. Stafford at Winchester was lovable and disarmed all hostility. He was liked and respected by all the boys."

Stafford gave up his scholarship to New College and went instead to University College, London. That brought him to live in London. Here he had to look around for some new means of keeping fit, for Stafford was a firm believer in physical fitness. Instead of horse-riding he became fascinated with roller-skating and often, after his day in the laboratory, would make his way to the Olympia skating rink. In a very quick time, too, he was taking part in numerous university activities, and he assisted in organising the social life of his college. In a short time, he was elected President of the Student Union. His first public appearance was as chairman for A. E. Housman, the famous poet, in the Foundation Oration at University College. With the assistance of a friend he organised a large bazaar. On a subsequent occasion he was chairman when his father opened the new University College playing-fields at Perivale, which were the outcome of this big social activity. At University College, in one of Sir William's laboratories, he met another young scientist, Alfred Egerton, who was a few years later to become his brother-in-law.

1910 was an eventful year for Stafford. He was twenty-one years of age. During his holidays abroad he stayed with a German family at Hamburg. It was in this year, 1910, that a Dr. Crippen killed his wife, cleared out of England and caused a search for him in all countries, including Germany. A facetious friend addressed a letter to Stafford in Hamburg "Dr. Crippen" and poor Stafford had to bear the brunt of resulting enquiries.

1910 was also an election year. His father had lost his seat in the General Election of 1908 and was now the Conservative candidate in a by-election at Wycombe. Filial loyalty and the directorship of what was known locally as the "Cripps Chronicle" demanded that Stafford should lend all the aid at his command. He had not the slightest idea as to the issues in the election. It was all good fun and exciting while it lasted. But this time a new light shone into his life.

A fair young woman with blonde hair entered the office one day and volunteered to help fold election addresses. Stafford looked down from an opening above where she was, and seeing her amongst many others, found out who she was. That day, with a group of other persons, they lunched at the same inn but did not speak to each other. During the following summer, Ruth Cripps, Stafford's sister, asked this young lady, Isobel Swithinbank, to Parmoor. There was a large house-party of young people including a number of Leonard Cripps' brother officers. It was a very gay party and they all went to Henley. Stafford began to think Isobel was quite nice. A week or two later, Miss Swithinbank went up to London to stay at the Cripps' town house at Queen's Gate Gardens, during her visit, plans were made for a ski-ing party to Klosters, in Switzerland, directly after Christmas. During the late summer, Isobel Swithinbank went off to Scotland with her parents, Stafford journeyed to Hamburg, where he stayed with some German friends. From there he continued on to Munich and other places in Europe. He started a correspondence with Isobel and from Nuremberg sent her a little teddy-bear in Bavarian dress. Then came the year's end visit to Switzerland. The party consisted of Ruth, Leonard and Stafford Cripps, Alfred Egerton, later to become Ruth's husband, and Ethel Slocock, a niece of Charles Alfred Cripps, who acted as chaperon. After a few days of mutual assistance on the ski-ing ground, Stafford and Isobel became engaged, left their skis and "were summoned home to report". . . . (The next time they ski-ed together was in the forests outside Moscow in 1941!) Miss Slocock chaperoned the ebullient young couple to Dover. Enid Allhusen, Isobel's sister, met the group at Dover and accompanied them home, while Miss Slocock, who had suffered an unfortunate Channel crossing, ruefully made her way back to Klosters.

It was suggested at first, owing to Stafford's youth, and the fact that he had as yet not even passed his Bar exams, that he and Isobel should not marry for at least five years. Nevertheless, they rejected this proposal and made such a nuisance of themselves that in the following July they were allowed to be married. Stafford was twenty-two years old—his wife was two years his junior.

But true to family tradition on both sides, the fathers, though forced to agree to an early marriage by the enthusiasm of the young folks, registered their votes on the matter and discussed the future of their children. The following letter from Isobel's

father to Charles Alfred Cripps on January 19th, 1911, reveals that Stafford had decided definitely to follow closely in the steps of his father and grandfather and devote himself to the law and politics. Mr. Harold Swithinbank, head of the new family to unite with the Cripps', in one of the most lucid and prophetic family documents extant, wrote to Stafford's father, saying:

"MY DEAR MR CRIPPS,

"Your son has probably ere this had a talk with you as to his plans for the future, as Isobel has had with me. I fully recognise that this is a matter rather for him and for you to decide, and that I can have little voice in the matter so far as regards what I may consider as tending towards the ultimate happiness of my daughter when she becomes his wife. But at the same time I would ask you that before any decision is made, the matter should be very carefully considered from every point of view

"From the conversation I had with you and a subsequent talk with Stafford himself, I gather that at the present moment two alternatives are being considered

"a That your son should take advantage of the scientific training he has had and a natural aptitude he possesses for the application of science to practical purposes, to engage in business life with a view not only to eventually becoming a successful business man, but of being able the sooner to make a comfortable home for his future wife.

"b That he should, following his father's footsteps, adopt a career at the bar, for which he is already entered, with a view to turning his scientific training and knowledge to account in that profession, and eventually entering political life.

"These I take it are the two alternatives at issue for the moment, and had it been absolutely essential for the young couple seriously to consider whether, after a certain period of waiting, they had or had not jointly a sufficient income to justify them in commencing married life, and to enable them to tide over that period of waiting which might naturally be expected to ensue before a substantial addition to that income could be expected from the exercise by Stafford of his profession, I should have been inclined to favour the idea of his at once immersing himself in business.

"But after our conversation of last week I take it that the young couple will start life with a united income sufficient to free them from anxiety as to the immediate present.

"We have to look further ahead than they at their time of life are likely to do, and the day will probably come when the necessity for amassing money in business will no longer exist, and when it does I cannot help

thinking that both Stafford and Isobel will be happier in political life, with the opportunity for the former to engage in science for science sake, than they could be were he immersed in business life, with all its ties and cares. Isobel has been brought up in the country and knows little of town life. That she would adapt herself to other conditions I have no doubt, but I question whether the absorption of her husband in business life would be so conducive to her happiness as the exercise of a profession which, although strenuous at times, would for a certain portion of the year, at all events, not prove so great a tie.

"I should be very glad to have a further talk with you over the matter when opportunity arises, but in the meantime I hope no definite decision will be made in the matter.

"I am sorry to say that Isobel has been suffering from a severe cold, but she seems determined to be well enough to come to you this afternoon.

"Believe me,

"Sincerely yours,

"HAROLD SWITHINBANK "

There was no doubt about Stafford's course. He would follow in his father's footsteps and travel via the law. His elder brother Seddon was already launched on a legal career. But he did not drop his scientific studies or ever lose his interest in them. Indeed in those early days of married life he still pursued his studies of science as well as law. He invented a Pyknometer, a device for measuring the density of liquids and gases. At twenty-two years of age he was part author of a paper "read" before the Royal Society, *The Critical Constants and Orthobaric Densities of Xenon*: the youngest student ever to read a paper before that learned body. He passed his final examinations for the Bar in the summer of 1912, and was called to the Bar at the beginning of the following year. He was twenty-four when called to the Bar of the Middle Temple.

Here Stafford now spent the days of his first year as a barrister, studying cases, revising and editing the family text-books: his grandfather's volume on the *Church and Clergy* and his father's on *Compensation*.

His political opinions had hardly taken shape. He had grown up in the shadows of his father's politics; later, Stafford was to repeat his father's experience of turning to politics while enjoying a successful career as a lawyer. Stafford himself writes of these early years and particularly of his young manhood:

"In the days before the last war I was almost entirely politically



unconscious Brought up in a traditionally Conservative middle-class family, seldom meeting anyone other than Conservatives, I accepted that environment quite naturally, and from time to time participated in some election or other political activity in the same way that I engaged in any other sport or social event. I was neither aware of democracy nor of politics in any real sense of the word. The course of events, so far as I was concerned, seemed to run smoothly and there appeared to me no reason why I or any other young man of my acquaintance should trouble himself with political controversies or electoral disputes. Educated as a chemist and with the prospect of a professional career at the Bar before me, I concentrated upon my studies, varying them with visits abroad whenever the opportunity and money were available."

He was tall, dark-haired, upright, of happy temperament, intensively active, athletic, quick-thinking, rapid in acquiring knowledge and essentially practical, combining manual and intellectual activity with the readiness of a born experimentalist. All the Crippsian traditions of family loyalty and love for one another were strongly developed within him. His father, governess Mazelle, and his aunt Mrs. Mary Playne had succeeded in keeping him ever conscious of his mother and with equal success had woven into the very texture of his mind all the implications and spirit of Theresa Cripps' faith and personal hope embodied in her dedicatory message.

In all his development, as of that of his forebears, there was no sense of history or of being part of a society in transition. All seemed as it was yesterday and to-day, stable and permanent. His religion was a personal religion. His ethics were personal ethics governing his attitude to other individuals without regard to the nature of society. The great tidal forces of social history had by-passed him as they had by-passed his father in earlier days. The drama of the struggle for world power, the growing rivalry of the modern imperial giants about to plunge them into an armageddon of the nations could not be seen from his corner of the world's theatre.

Nor did his marriage to Isobel Swithinbank, the granddaughter of Mr. J. C. Eno, inventor of the famous "Fruit Salt", bring him any greater awareness of the great social trends of the time. She brought him love, an outlook similar in kind to his own which blended with his aims, ambitions, ideals and gave strength to all that he had derived from his mother. Here was no challenger, to shake him out of beliefs that had become instinctive, into new ways of thought. She would be lover, wife,

mother to his children, nurse in sickness, comrade in strength, his faith her faith, his ambitions her ambitions.

It is necessary to add, however, that when Stafford studied at University College he came into contact with a completely different order of people from his friends and family at Parmoor, Winchester and their environs. During the time that the young couple were engaged and Isobel was taken by her family on a motor tour to France, Stafford wrote a long letter to his fiancée expressing his perplexities on "poverty and riches", and Isobel, though she had lived in an environment of riches, had often sincere but unexpressed questionings on this subject herself at quite an early age. These feelings were to have a certain portent for the future but at this time their experience was not acute enough for articulation.

In the summer of 1914, Stafford Cripps, the father of two infant children, John and Diana, studied intricate cases in Chambers, sat upon the window-sill and with his colleagues played games and light-heartedly discussed the "tit-bits" of the day. Their future was assured and the world was seemingly a jolly good place in which to live. This summer, too, saw Stafford's father, whom Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister, had appointed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, promoted to the House of Lords and become Baron Parmoor of Frieth. Parmoor was the name of his house. Frieth was the name of the nearest village.

Suddenly the revolver shot of Sarajevo echoed around the world and the epoch of war and revolution had begun. Without a moment's hesitation Stafford and his brothers volunteered for service in the armed forces. His elder brother, Seddon, became an officer in the Lincolnshire Yeomanry. Freddie Cripps, who had become a director of a Russian-English Bank in St. Petersburg, resigned his post and joined the Royal Buckinghamshire Hussars, fought in Gallipoli, Palestine and France, was wounded and decorated; a heroic soldier indeed. His brother Leonard rejoined the Fourth Hussars. Stafford ceased law work and in October of 1914 he went to France as the driver of a lorry presented to the Red Cross by his wife's grandfather. He was engaged for a year at the Boulogne base in a shuttle service supplying heavy goods. Here, as others who joined in 1914, he qualified for the Mons Medal. While he was engaged in this work he was instrumental in providing a new and special type of slipper for men suffering from frost-bite. He was waiting under orders at Boulogne in 1915 to proceed to Ypres for gas work.

when he was recalled for work in the explosives department of the Ministry of Munitions.

Now a new kind of life began for him and his wife. For a time he worked at Waltham Abbey to learn the practical scientific work of the department. Stafford managed to rent a little red-brick villa at Cheshurst, near Waltham Cross. As a surprise for Isobel, Stafford had arranged for her old "Nana" who had cared for her since babyhood to come and help, and to Isobel's joy she was there to greet her on the doorstep. Stafford was alternately on day and night shift and did a very thorough and intensive short course, working through every process. Isobel and Nana were up at five-thirty getting his midday dinner ready, which he took off on his bicycle tied up in a red-cotton handkerchief.

Whilst they were here one of the first German giant Zeppelins was brought down in flames. A few bombs dropped along the river but except for one direct hit on an insignificant part of the plant no damage was done to the factory itself.

After a time he was sent to the Government factory at Queensferry, near Chester, the largest explosive factory in the British Empire. It specialised in high explosives.

This meant he had to "move house". Again with his wife and children he took a house near the factory. His job was an important one. Besides using his knowledge as a chemist he was responsible for the organisation of thousands of work-people. In this case, as usual, Cripps tackled it thoroughly, studied carefully, yet rapidly, every detail of the workings of the plant and the production processes. His capacity was so obvious and so quickly revealed in the rapid lowering of production costs that he was made assistant superintendent of the plant. His energy seemed inexhaustible, although it was far from being the case. He worked sixteen to twenty hours a day. It was a great experience in every respect. He made here his first real contact with the working-class, although the experience rang no political bells in his mind. Here he conducted himself as the most efficient of managers, a Christian gentleman, patriarchal in his willingness to meet the lowliest workmen and women in the factory and listen with unfailing courtesy to every grievance and consider every suggestion from whatever quarter it might come.

It was an experience he was not likely to forget although his complete absorption in it at the time obscured its social and political significance. There came a day, however, some twenty years later when Britain was again at war, that standing on the Opposition side of the House of Commons he joined in the

challenge to the Government of the day to take profiteering out of the industrial prosecution of the war. He told the story of his experience at the Queensferry munition plant. He said

"I was for a considerable period of time in a position of management in what was, I think, the largest Government factory in this country. It was a factory which was erected at a cost of £7,750,000. It was a factory which was destroyed at the end of the war at the request of the people who have put this Amendment on the Paper. Among other units in this factory at Queensferry were the two finest sulphuric-acid plants in the world at the time, and part of my job was to deal with the cost accounts of the factory. In order to deal with them efficiently I had access to the cost accounts of every other sulphuric-acid manufacturing plant in England, France, Italy, Canada and the United States of America, to compare the standard which we were manufacturing and to see what economies could be made. We had to start with an entirely unskilled staff. Not a single person either of the management or the operatives had ever worked in a chemical or explosive factory before that factory was started in wartime. It was started up on war prices. We had to pay very heavy prices for our sulphur (which comes from Sicily) owing to war insurance and freight and for other war materials as well. Our cost figures were lower than those of any pre-war sulphuric acid manufacturers in this country. In fact they were so much lower that a year or two after we had started up, a deputation of the sulphuric acid manufacturers of England came to see the Minister of Munitions and said, 'We ask you to give an undertaking that you will destroy this factory at the end of the war, as otherwise every sulphuric acid manufacturer goes out of business.' And as a result, immediately after the war these two plants, the most efficient in the country, became derelict, and I presume that the remains of them are probably to be seen today on the site of Queensferry where they were put. That was a tremendous loss to the industry of this country. For the first time, oleum manufacture had been started, that is to say, a high concentration of sulphuric acid was available for sending in railway trucks to any manufacturer at a price that was very much lower than anything that could be quoted by other manufacturers. In normal times, where there was no acute crisis or a war, would they have contemplated putting such a factory up if they knew that at the end of two and a half years there was a danger of having to close down as a result of pressure from these very people?"

It was a great experience but one that did not last through the First World War. After some months, Stafford became exceedingly ill. Overwork, fumes from the chemical plants, and intestinal disease which he had contracted in France in the first

year of the war laid him prostrate. The doctors thought he had little chance of recovery. He was taken to a nursing home in Chester. After some months he recovered sufficiently for himself and his wife to live in a tiny flat in Half Moon Street in London whilst he found a desk job in the Ministry of Agriculture. A few more months of work and illness dragged him down again. For the next two years he was an invalid.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE YOUNGEST K.C.

IT was not until the year 1919 that Stafford Cripps was able to resume his professional activities. He began where he had left off under H. A. Colefax, K.C., preparing patent cases in which his scientific knowledge was of great value. But he was far from being a really physically fit man. Indeed he had before him a long struggle against ill-health and it would be extremely difficult to assess how much his search for health has played in the moulding of the personality he is to-day. However that may be it certainly encouraged him to make a decision in keeping with the Crippsian tradition. He had come from the countryside. He returned to it. A few miles from Cirencester, where the Cripps' had lived for centuries, he bought an old manor farm, with its deeds going back to 1615. The name of the house was "Goodfellows" and it was situated on the edge of the village named Filkins. Here the Cripps' brought their three children, John, Diana and Theresa; at "Goodfellows" too, Peggy, their fourth child, was born in 1921.

Filkins, when Stafford Cripps and his family took up residence at "Goodfellows", was a backward place of Saxon origin that could trace its history to the beginnings of the twelfth-century. Once it was part of a little manor estate surrounded by open fields until the days of the enclosures. It had no church until 1850, when it became a separate parish. All the houses and barns were built of the famous golden stone of Filkins and great slabs of it were used for fencing the gardens in the streets.

"Goodfellows" once consisted of two blocks of buildings at right angles to each other. Stafford Cripps enlarged the accommodation by altering the house into a T shape. The stone and the slates for the additions were dug from the neighbouring fields and the craftsmanship was furnished by the best mason of Filkins, a Mr. George Swinford, to make certain that the new blended with the old. For the first few years the Cripps' were hard up and didn't do anything to the buildings at all. They tried to put the garden into order; then, as Stafford's practice increased and he made more money, they gradually started on

the building, and added on the wing. With garden, trees, ground and fields in keeping with the wider landscape, far away from the turmoil that was London, "Goodfellows" became home indeed, a model of contemporary village planning where all the Crippsian traditions could flourish in perfect harmony, untouched by the storms of the world.

Cripps now divided his time between the Law Courts and "Goodfellows" and, with a bailiff, managed the farm. He studied sheep-breeding, and had great success with his flock of pedigree Ryeland sheep. He planted hedges around a beautiful lawn, chopped trees, and fully equipped a carpenter's shop where he pursued his favourite hobby of furniture-making. This became a rendezvous for a friend he had made during his short time at the Ministry of Agriculture. Sir Lawrence Weaver, author, architect and critic. Although he was twelve years Stafford's senior, they became firm friends and oft-times, until ten years later, when he died, they spent many evenings together. Between them, in 1923 they founded the Ashted Potteries Ltd., a non-profit-earning Friendly Society for the training and employment in the manufacture of pottery of seriously disabled ex-servicemen. The society was started, not only with the idea of assisting these men, but also with the idea of incorporating into pottery manufacturing the most up-to-date technical methods, based upon a study of the industry in European countries, and of living up to the best standard of craftsmanship in the English pottery industry.

The Ashted plan was the result of a question which Stafford asked one morning: was it not possible to make a jam container more attractive for the breakfast table than the ordinary pot?

Through this friendship Stafford and his wife one day added two boys to their family. The Weavers had two sons, Toby and Purcell. In January, 1927, Lady Weaver, who with her family had been on holiday over Christmas, was stricken with pneumonia and died at "Goodfellows". From that time onwards Isobel Cripps became a second mother to the boys and three years later, when Sir Lawrence also died, the Cripps' took both of them into the family as their own.

"The man who is a good citizen is not necessarily a bad husband and father," said Cripps in one of his early church speeches; "in fact he is probably a good one." Of this there can be few better examples than Cripps himself. "Goodfellows" could be held up as a model of the typical English county family.

A maternal forebear of Cripps, William "Citizen" Potter, had

been fond of regaling his family with maxims which were intended to highlight "the salient characteristics of the English". On one of these occasions he said: "Always *appear* to be busy, even if you are not." A highly respected Quaker and Radical, his high principles and worthy sentiments did not prove sufficient to preserve him from the clutches of drink. There is nothing in Stafford Cripps' life to indicate that he had ever suffered any anxiety over the fate of William "Citizen" Potter, or that he has deliberately patterned his life in antithesis to this ancestor. Whether by the feat of a "collective unconscious" or the direct and conscious influence of Theresa Potter Cripps' testament to her children, Stafford Cripps has never had to *appear* to be busy. He has, in fact, been so busily occupied throughout his life that a by-product of this habit has been the development of an outer calm and ease as if to contravert William Potter, and "always appear to be free, ready, available, even if you are not."

His legal work grew rapidly. As well as work on patent cases he appeared on the Oxford Circuit and in the London County Courts. His first important case which arrested public attention as well as that of the legal profession dealt with the invention of a black dye. The case lasted ten days. He so lucidly explained to the Court of Appeal the chemical process involved in the making of the dye, and showed his mastery of every detail, that his reputation as an exponent of patent cases was quickly and definitely established.

Apart from his intellectual ability and remarkable memory, Cripps' capacity for sustained hard work was the main factor in his success. From the very beginning he always knew more about his case than anyone else on either side; he was often able to correct his opponent's prepared speech, with the latter's full approval, and to refer the Judge to documents which no one else could find. He frequently worked over his documents until the early hours of the morning, to make sure that his cases were thoroughly prepared. He was, consequently, never taken by surprise or at a loss to counter any move of his opponents, however astute. It is perhaps not realised by the layman how much of the apparent superiority of some counsel is due to sheer energy and concentration; at any rate the "infinite capacity for taking pains" was always one of the outstanding attributes of Stafford Cripps.

The important result of his amazing efficiency was that a solicitor who had once briefed Stafford never thought of employing anyone else, if he was available, and this created an



ever-widening circle of clients. But every barrister, however good, has to make his own way, and some of the ablest men are never wanted at all. English barristers do not take instructions from clients, but only through the medium of a solicitor, the two branches of the legal profession being quite separate. A young barrister, therefore, cannot originate, still less purchase a practice for himself, he works as an individual, not as a member of a firm, and anything in the nature of advertising is absolutely forbidden.

The young man begins his career at the Bar as a pupil to one of the barristers already in a set of Chambers. If he is fortunate and there is room for him, he may be able to stay on and become a regular member of the group, gradually building up a practice of his own, until finally he may even take over the Chambers himself when the previous head retires from the Bar or is appointed to Judicial office. By this means there often grows up an almost hereditary system, with the highest traditions of unselfishness and mutual help. A full understanding of Stafford Cripps cannot be had without appreciating that he owed almost as much to this as his successors owe to him to-day for his application and embellishment of those traditions.

An informal system of /"devilling"/ is common, whereby the beginner looks up cases and assists in their preparation. But quite apart from this, every member of a well-regulated set of Chambers can and does take advantage of the help of every other, however senior, in dealing with his legal problems. Thus, when an opinion is given, it has often been tested by prolonged debate between able and experienced lawyers, who have no axe to grind and get no fee of any kind, but whose criticism immediately strengthens the confidence of the actual giver of the opinion.

Members of the Chambers will very often be found having tea together in the senior members' room after the courts rise at four o'clock, and, although topics of legal interest are discussed, there is an active impression of companionship and freedom, more reminiscent of a university common-room than of a lawyer's office.

Such was the atmosphere of Cripps' Chambers after the 1914-18 war when he shared them with, among others, the late Aubrey Lawrence, a distinguished ecclesiastical lawyer and a very charming personality. On one occasion this eminent Chancellor of several Dioceses suddenly found the copy of *The Times*, which he stood reading, a mass of flames. Stafford Cripps had lit it with a match. Lawrence was not in the least upset

though a trifle startled; for in those days Stafford was always fond of a joke, and there was generally a "leg-pull" of some kind to be expected. "Mock trials" on trifling subjects were a speciality of this period.

But there is about the work of the Bar itself an almost monastic air at times, and the severe self-discipline which it involves is combined with intense individualism and strong competition. These may be thought to have had a marked effect on Stafford Cripps, especially when it is remembered that a busy barrister has little or no personal contact even with his lay client, still less with the outside world in general. Certainly his moral standards seemed to be so high as to make almost impossible demands on human nature. His colleagues were far below his level in this, but their education and upbringing were generally such as to respond to his example, and this perhaps tended to give him an unduly high estimate of the extent to which the man in the street could be expected to appreciate his exalted morals.

His rise to success at the Bar was unusually rapid. Starting his career after the war on the Oxford Circuit, he was briefed in a number of small cases, in County Courts and at Quarter Sessions, which he conducted with ease and mastery. He was soon noticed by the solicitor to the Great Western Railway, who began to employ him regularly in minor cases of a technical nature, such as arbitrations to settle the value of property acquired for the extension of the railway, where his gift for cross-examination of experts, such as surveyors or engineers, appeared at once. For the same reasons, he was also briefed by other solicitors in connection with the valuation of property for the purpose of local rates.

Meanwhile, at his Chambers in London, where Sir Arthur Colefax, K C., had succeeded Alfred Cripps, there was a substantial goodwill in patent work and Stafford soon got his chance in the simpler aspects of this. He made no mistake about taking it, and the patent agents who consulted him in connection with applications and oppositions in the Patent Office soon realised that they had to deal with a man of unusual stature. Apart from his scientific qualifications, which were quite out of the ordinary, he handled difficult cases with a certainty and authority seldom shown by any junior member of the Bar. In this field, too, clients were soon found and never afterwards lost.

Within five years of his return to the Bar, though yet unknown to the outside world, Stafford already had a very sound practice of the highest class. He was then retained in a case which was to

prove a landmark in his career. His client was the Duff Development Company, which had been in litigation with the Government of Kelantan, one of the unfederated Malay States, since 1916. The dispute concerned a concession which the company had obtained for the development of a tract of country containing mining, timber and rubber-growing areas. It involved two hearings before the House of Lords, besides an arbitration which lasted seventy-nine days.

Cripps was responsible for the strategy and planning of the case. Many important questions of arbitration were raised. Then there were highly complicated issues of constitutional law to be examined. The Colonial Office had with the utmost cynicism successfully claimed on Kelantan's behalf that the Sultan was an independent foreign sovereign. Such being the case, it was argued, he was not subject to the jurisdiction of the British courts unless he voluntarily submitted to be bound. Cripps, however, handled the matter so skilfully that in the end the Colonial Office felt compelled to sanction the payment of no less than £387,000 to the company.

This case was a most important one for Cripps in several ways. It brought him into close contact with several of the leading K.C.s of the day, including Sir Douglas Hogg and Mr. F. J. Maugham (both afterwards Lord Chancellors), Lord Justice Scott, and Mr. W. H. Upjohn, probably the most formidable legal figure of his generation. Cripps showed that he was quite at home in this company, and one and all of them recognised his outstanding ability. They were particularly impressed by his cross-examination of a distinguished professor whom he reduced to speechlessness by reference to his own published works. They admired also the masterly way he had indexed and digested the voluminous evidence, thus giving his own leaders an immense advantage over their opponents. The Colonial Office solicitor was so impressed that he began almost at once to brief Cripps in the Privy Council, where he appeared more than once as a junior in cases raising questions of Colonial administration.

Meanwhile, Cripps also became known in matters most directly affecting the public. Following the example of the Great Western Railway, the Middlesex County Council, the City of London Corporation, and finally the London County Council employed him as their junior counsel in compensation cases. When the four main line railways came to be amalgamated and their charges for passengers and freight were reviewed for the purpose of providing a standard revenue (the first step towards

nationalisation, taken by the Coalition Government in 1921) the L.C.C. was interested in the charges for workmen's fares and season tickets. They briefed Cripps, who gained a great success for them working in close touch with an equally little-known representative of the London Labour Party, named Herbert Morrison. Each recognised the other's capacity at once, and this association had important consequences in later years.

Legally, the railway enquiry was to mark Cripps out in yet another field, for apart from putting him in the front rank of experts in railway law, it led naturally to his employment at the Parliamentary Bar, i.e. in private bills before the committee of the Lords and Commons and in governmental and local enquiries. But for his many other fields and for his coming into Parliament itself, which must automatically exclude him from such practice, Cripps could have easily become leader of the Parliamentary Bar, had he so chosen.

All this time, Cripps was rapidly coming to the top of the tree in the conduct of patent actions, an extremely difficult and arduous task for any man who specialises in that field and no other, but a phenomenal one for Cripps, who had as varied a practice as anyone at the Bar. Alfied Cripps had left the Bar too soon for Stafford to appear with him in many cases, but Stafford had gained valuable experience from working under such well-known patent lawyers as Sir Arthur Colefax, Rudolph Moritz, and James Whitehead, who in turn found that they had sitting behind them not a mere beginner but a man who knew more about their cases than they did themselves, and was prepared to intervene in the argument, whenever required, with telling and often decisive effect.

It was not long before Cripps was being spoken of as the most brilliant man at the Bar. Parmoor knew the toll which this success must be exacting. Stafford's health and work in the law had always been Parmoor's concern. Father and son visited each other as frequently as was possible. Hurriedly-penned notes, comment of special events of the day, Easter, Christmas and birthday-letters that were longer and more personal, and oft-times throughout the years messages of epistolary length on historical political and religious problems passed between father and son until Parmoor's death in 1941. Parmoor's pride in his son's achievements and personal affection were always apparent.

Writing to Stafford at Christmastide in 1923, when his son was ill, Parmoor wrote.

"The law is a great strain even for the robust and there is no room for much outside work—above all things, avoid evening meetings and night journeys after hard work at the courts. I know more than one of my friends who tried this, and had to suffer from the evil effects. It is more than the average strength of man can do, and it should not be attempted. I know this may mean disappointment but this must be faced. A time will come to you when the call for religious and public work will be stronger and then possibly the conditions of your professional life may be such, that you could do such work either as a judge or in some other sphere. There is no need to be in any way cast down about the future."

The following year, in a New Year's letter, Parmoor develops another theme

"May your next year be as progressive as 1924. I should ask you to think carefully over the question of taking silk and not delay too long. My own father was always advising me in a contrary direction and did not much like the risks and chances if they could be avoided. I am all for going ahead."

"It is a great delight to me to hear so much of you from my own profession, although I have rather parted from the Bar in the last year."

And in a congratulatory note on his birthday, Parmoor developed the same theme further

"April 22nd, 1925

"It will soon be time for you to think of the next step in your profession by becoming a K.C. This however is a matter for careful consideration. My own view is not to put this step off, as soon as you think you can take it and keep your work."

"I cannot help thinking that it would be good for you and Isobel and the children to have a house in London. This expense is a small matter compared with health and quiet and the blessing of a wife to look after you."

On July 26th, 1926, Cripps applied to the Lord Chancellor for silk. "Taking silk" is a risky matter. Once a barrister has become a K.C. he can no longer do the "junior" work which he has done previously. But there usually comes a time when a barrister is so busy as a junior preparing cases before trial that he has to make up his mind whether to take silk or not. "Silks" join a circuit, of course, of their own choice. Before taking silk, the barrister must write to every silk on the circuit telling him of his application. This is a kind of warning and form of courtesy, that the barrister is about to join his band. Once he has done that he

can no longer do the work of the junior and must wait for the higher kind of briefs coming in. And sometimes they don't come.

The following April, Stafford Cripps took silk, becoming the youngest King's Counsel at the British Bar, with him was D. N. Pritt, fellow-student with Cripps at Winchester, though two years Stafford's senior, and later, in turn, one of Cripps' most ardent political supporters and equally ardent critic.

Parmoor's heart rejoiced.

"MY VERY DEAR STAFFORD,

"I had hoped to see you and give personal congratulations but I have not had a chance. I think that the appointment has come just at the right time and that a move forward is for you a move in the direction of progress. My father and myself were co-benchers at the Middle Temple and I shall hope to be present when your time comes to be called to the Bench of the Middle Temple. I have full confidence in your future and you have only to keep fit to make your way to the head of a great profession. I cannot tell you how much I rejoice and this is quite the right medicine for dear Isobel.

"Your very affectionate father,

"PARMOOR "

He wrote also to Isobel Cripps on the same day.

"MY VERY DEAR ISOBEL,

"I am immensely delighted that Staff should have become a K. C. It is a right step, and should bring him in due time to the front of the Bar. May he much prosper and you have health and strength in working with him and encouraging him. He must be taking Silk at about the same age that I did and comes as the third generation. My father and myself were benchers together, which was said at the time to be a record and now there is hope that Staff may become a bencher at the same time as his Father.

"I have full confidence in the future and you should be really proud of Staff's ability and success.

"Our dear love to you both,

"Your very affectionate father,

"P "

A photograph of Stafford "Taking Silk", standing with the rest of the group, smoking, sent to Parmoor by Isobel Cripps gave him a little amusement. Thanking her in a letter he remarks: "It seems shockingly modern to have a cigarette in the full dress of a K. C."

As a King's Counsel Stafford achieved prominence at once and his practice continued to grow in scope and importance, culminating, briefly, in the period when he was Solicitor-General in the second Labour Government. After those few months he resumed his practice and his progress continued unabated.

His subsequent patent cases included such noted actions as *I. G. Farbenindustrie v Imperial Chemical Industries* (a case of great importance for the British dye industry), *Mullard Radio Company Limited v Philco Radio Company Limited* (the famous "Pentode Valve" case in which his exposition of the history of thermionic valves before the House of Lords took over seven days), and the still more renowned artificial silk case, *Courtaulds v British Celanese*. He appeared too for the *Lightening Fastener Co., Ltd.* (Zip-fasteners), *Crompton Parkinson* (frosted glass articles), for *Carton Ltd.*, with regard to patents concerning improvement in the packing of inverted sugar cubes, and for the *Westinghouse Company* concerning railway automatic signalling. His most important case dealing with trade-mark practice was probably that in which he appeared for the *Shredded Wheat Company* against *Kelloggs* of the U.S.A.

Other important litigation included his work in connection with the *Safeguarding of Industries Act*, the *Railway and Canal Commission*, the *Dock Charges Committee*, and the *Railway Rates Tribunal*. Then there was his good work in connection with workmen's fares when he appeared for the *London County Council*. He appeared too on the *Royal Commission for Inventors* and for the *London County Council* in an action for damages arising from delays in building the new County Hall. He also represented *Paddington Borough Council* in an action to enforce a provision of the *Public Health Act* and the *Battersea Borough Council* to enforce a provision of the *Housing Act* of 1925.

Frequently he appeared in Dominion and Colonial cases. In what became known as the "Dried Fruits Case" Cripps was employed by the Tasmanian and Western Australian Governments to argue their case before the Privy Council. For the Government of Nigeria he argued a constitutional case relating to a writ of habeas corpus. He appeared for Nelson in the *Nelson v. Rex* case. Nelson was senior elected member of the Legislative Council of Western Samoa (held by New Zealand under mandate). The administrator of Western Samoa believed that Nelson was the head of an organisation called the "Mau",

the purpose of which was to secure self-government for Samoa, and exiled Nelson from Samoa for five years. Nelson appealed to the Privy Council, where Cripps argued for him that the enquiry was not carried out according to the principles of natural justice. The Privy Council dismissed the appeal.

Compensation cases were of course a speciality. There was that of *Rosen v. Owner of the Steamship Quercus*. It appeared that on the night of February 7th, 1931, the *Quercus* was in the harbour of Porto Allegro, Brazil, moored to a quay about six feet away from it. Rosen, a seaman, had returned to his ship after an evening ashore. The night was clear. He went to the fore-castle to sleep. At two-thirty a.m. a splash was heard, and his body was recovered next day. It was surmised that during the night in going to the lavatory he had tripped and fallen overboard. This case reached the House of Lords, and they held that in spite of the fact that he had no duty at the time of the accident on deck, the man's death could be held to have arisen during the course of his employment.

Another important compensation case in which he appeared before the Privy Council on behalf of four workmen was that of *Broker v. Thames Borthwick (Australia) Ltd.* The workmen were injured whilst at work by the effects of the earthquake at Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, on February 3rd, 1931. The Privy Council awarded for the workmen.

A most exciting case arose out of the unemployment crisis of the early thirties. An organisation had been set up called the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Wal Hannington, an organiser of the movement, made a speech in Trafalgar Square, as a result of which he was arrested on the premises of the N.U.W.M. and certain documents were seized by the police, some of which were retained by them. These documents were used at the trial of Elias, a colleague of Hannington, who was being tried for sedition, but had not been returned to the plaintiffs, among them Elias, at the conclusion of the trial. The plaintiffs claimed damages for trespass to the premises, the return of the letters, and damages for detention. The case caused considerable interest because of its political nature. Cripps and Pritt, K.C., and Mitchison appeared for the plaintiffs, and the Attorney-General, Sir Thomas Inskip, led for the defendant, the police. The learned judge ruled that whilst there was a right to search all persons arrested, it did not justify seizure of documents belonging to persons other than the persons arrested, and that the documents had been wrongfully detained.



Cripps rendered signal service to working people by his clarification of the legal doctrine of "common employment". This doctrine laid down that injuries sustained at work through the negligence of a fellow-workman could not be the subject of a claim for damage against the "common employer". In the case of *Radcliffe v Ribble Motor Services Limited*, Cripps appeared for the orphan daughter of a bus-driver who was killed in collision with another vehicle belonging to the same company. Cripps succeeded in establishing the view that "common employment" must imply not only the same employer, but the same job or work, and in so doing he severely limited the application of this law. Heavy damages were awarded in the *Radcliffe* case and the result was of great importance to all transport workers.

A sensational case in which Stafford Cripps figures as a leading counsel was known as "The Sunshine Roof Case"—officially *Mechanical and General Inventions Company Limited v Austin*. The company sued Sir Herbert Austin on two agreements under which it was alleged that they imparted certain information relating to the sunshine roof on the understanding that the information should only be used by Austin for the purpose of a licence to be given under the patent, whereas he used it for his own purposes. The case was tried by Mr Justice Hawke and a special jury and Cripps appeared for the company. There were lengthy and close cross-examinations of both Sir Herbert and Mr. Lehwen of the plaintiff company and at the conclusion of the trial a verdict was given for the company on both grounds and with heavy damages. On appeal to the Court of Appeal the decision of the first court was reversed and the Master of the Rolls (Lord Hanworth) strongly criticised the methods of cross-examination in the court below. On appeal to the House of Lords, however, the House reversed the findings of the Court of Appeal so far as the second agreement was concerned and restored the findings of the jury with the damages assessed at £35,000. At the same time the Lord Chancellor (Lord Sankey) disagreed with the Master of the Rolls, saying that his criticisms of the cross-examination did not apply, in the opinion of the House of Lords, to that by Cripps, which was also described by Lord Blanesburgh as "polite, but severe."

Another sensational case was that of *Machinemade Sales and Others v. Davies and Others*. In this case, Cripps appeared for Ivor Guest and led Lionel Cohen, K.C. (later Lord Justice Cohen). The company together with two others, all in

liquidation, claimed damages for fraud and breach of duty against Davies, Guest and Noel, and also sought damages against Lord Wimborne. It was alleged that the first three for their own profit had rigged the market in the shares of all three companies. The case was full of complexities and when it came before Mr Justice Luxmore in October, 1936, there was a nineteen-days hearing. The actions against Guest and Wimborne were dropped, and the allegations were withdrawn and both were dismissed from the suit with costs.

The only matrimonial case he ever dealt with was that of *Cunningham Reid v Cunningham Reid* in 1938. The case was brought by Captain Cunningham Reid, the M.P. for Marylebone, against his wife, asking for a declaration that certain deeds by which his wife had assured him a portion of her income were still effective. This case got great publicity because of the status of the persons involved, and the remarkable concentration of legal talent. Mrs Cunningham Reid was a sister of Lady Louis Mountbatten (now Countess). Cripps was briefed for the plaintiff together with Evershed, K.C. (now Lord Justice), and Valentine Holmes, whilst Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., Cyril Radcliffe, K.C., and Charles Russell appeared for the wife. At the end of the week the case was "settled" by agreement.

One of the last big cases in which Cripps figured and which ranked high for the complexity of the issues, the amount of money at stake and the number of counsel involved was that of the *Westminster Bank v Liverpool Marine* and other insurance companies. It arose out of the failure of the Capital Film Company and the Westminster Bank claimed £1,000,000 from a group of the leading insurance companies. There were in all thirty-five consolidated actions which came to be heard in the Commercial Court before Mr. Justice Singleton. When the hearing began, the judge adjourned for a short while in order to allow counsel to sort themselves out, and the strange sight was seen of K.C.'s occupying three full rows and junior counsel occupying the jury box. Cripps took five days to open the case, and at the end of the opening the case was settled.

When, later, Cripps was appointed Solicitor-General, he and Sir Wilham Jowitt, Attorney-General, made a powerful combination. Though the office of Solicitor-General naturally gave added prestige to Cripps, it probably did not make a great difference to his practice, for he would have been just as successful without it. There is no doubt that, since Sir Wilfred Green became Master of the Rolls, Cripps had a unique position at the

Bar, apart from jury cases, in which Sir Patrick Hastings and Mr. Norman Birkett had an outstanding reputation. Cripps did not specialise in jury cases. It has been suggested that had he partaken in this branch of the law, he would have been better prepared for his subsequent political career through the necessity of "playing to the jury." Be that as it may, Cripps appealed to jurists because of his particular gift of "thinking on his feet" and always dealing at once with questions put from the Bench. His voice and manner of address, when enunciating even the most abstruse points, never lost the interest of the court no matter how long and complicated the case, and the court was quick to recognise his talent because he never said "I will deal with that later."

According to Gregory Krikorian, a member of his Chambers, "Cripps was very free of any mannerism in Court. His manner was cool and collected and meticulously polite. His voice, which was well-modulated, was capable of keeping the same pitch for days on end. He relied on a very carefully prepared note for opening and in a case of any complexity he invariably provided himself with a pulpit made of legal tomes on which his notes were deposited and which made it unnecessary for him to crouch down in order to pick up the thread of his argument. His notes were invariably carefully indexed with cross references to pages in the Law Reports or correspondence and it was sometimes the subject of amusement to see him waiting patiently at the right page whilst his opponents floundered through mazes of papers or whilst their Lordships at their more leisurely ease withdrew their attention from one passage in order to fasten it on the other. He relied, too, on carefully indoctrinated juniors behind him always passing to him the right letters in a mass of correspondence. All this gave an impression of formidable competence, which was only slightly affected in moments of stress by the careful rolling up and unrolling of the tab on his silk gown. The observer was sometimes delightfully surprised to notice that the icy calm in court was relieved on his way to and from the robing-room by a gay propeller-like action imparted to his keys which he carried on a long chain."

On one occasion in 1928 after a Parliamentary Committee hearing on certain railway Bills, the Earl Russell passed Cripps a note: "I prefer listening to you rather than your father—but don't tell him so!" On the refusal of a witness to answer questions Russell sent Stafford another note containing a brief sentence: "Buy a winkle pin!"

During the years between 1925-29, in which his legal work took up most of his time and energy, Cripps was repeatedly harassed with intestinal troubles and time and again he was forced to rest from his labours. The view that "his legal work took up most of his time and energy" is advanced advisably, for in these years when he was making such rapid strides in the legal profession he also stepped into the political arena.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CHURCHMAN'S FIGHT FOR PEACE

**D**URING his convalescence in the later years of the 1914-18 war Stafford Cripps began to think seriously about political affairs. He writes

"Till the end of the War, I was largely an invalid with much time for reading and thinking. As a result, by the time the war was over I had become aware—indeed very aware—of the appalling and useless tragedy that the world had brought upon itself. At this point my political conscience was born. I was still, however, living in a tradition of conservatism, though the result of the war experience upon my father had very greatly changed his political outlook. His sense of the interference with all liberty of conscience and of the injustice wrought upon the common people had convinced him that some new outlook was necessary if civilisation were to be saved from destruction."

Stafford's birth of "political consciousness" was really an extension of his moral conscience into the world of politics and not the intellectual understanding of the political relations of people in a developing society. Instinctively he turned for guidance to those who had helped to mould him in his formative years—to his father, Lord Parmoor, and to Doctor Burge, his headmaster at Winchester, who had become a close personal friend.

But, as Stafford observes, great changes had taken place in Lord Parmoor. He was no longer the Conservative of the days when Stafford ran his local paper. In the years immediately preceding the war he had been moving away from his old Conservative moorings. One of the first things to shake him out of the old ruts of thought had been the famous Taff Vale Decision of the House of Lords which had challenged the very existence of the Trade Unions. Then the Liberal struggle against the House of Lords in 1910-11 stirred him and he condemned the non-representative character of the Second Chamber. He had become aware of the political awakening of the working class in these years and instead of reacting towards it in a Conservative way his religious conscience led him to become more liberal. One day it would lead him into a Labour Government. Hence,

when the war came in 1914, he was, to the surprise of everyone, found on the side of Lord Morley, John Burns and the pacifists opposing the war

He agreed with Erasmus that "war is so pestilent that it blights at once all morality, so impious that it has nothing in common with Christ" As the war progressed and conscientious objectors were persecuted for saying and doing that which Parmoor regarded as being in keeping with his own Christian sentiments, he came to their aid. He sought to modify the harsh treatment being meted out to them. Most of them were Christian Socialists. Many of them were Quakers and it was in this work on their behalf that he met his second wife, Marion Ellis, the daughter of a famous Quaker, the Rt Hon John Ellis.

In 1917 the Government issued a new order under the Defence of the Realm Act which insisted that no book or pamphlet dealing with the war or the making of peace should be published unless it be first submitted to the censor. "The Society of Friends" felt that this regulation was opposed to the principles of Christian liberty, and proceeded to issue a number of leaflets presenting the facts about the treatment of conscientious objectors. Edith Ellis, twin sister of Marion Ellis, along with other members of the Friends' Committee responsible for the distribution of the leaflets, were sentenced to six months' imprisonment for this offence.

Parmoor became increasingly active. Through Marion Ellis he came into contact with the Swedish Archbishop Soederblom and joined with him in an effort to organise an International Christian Conference "without prejudice to national loyalty . . . to weigh in prayer the duty of the Church to resist the passions of war, and to promote that temper which makes for justice and good-will in all the intercourse of Nations." Associated with this effort, which came to nothing, were Doctor Burge, the Winchester College headmaster who had become the Bishop of Southwark, Doctor William Temple, subsequently the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dean Inge. On the visit of President Wilson to London at the end of 1918 Parmoor led a deputation of Bishop Gore, Lord Buckmaster and Doctor G. P. Gooch to the President and presented an address in which the deputation assured him "of their whole-hearted support of his ideal of the formation of a League of Nations which would present an effective, if not infallible, barrier to future wars, and would do what was possible to ensure that justice, instead of force, should be the dominating influence."

Lord Parmoor also associated himself with the Lansdowne Peace letter to the press, expressing the demand for moderate peace terms. In March, 1918, he placed the first resolution in favour of a League of Nations on the order paper of the House of Lords. When his son Stafford began to reflect on these things in the days of his convalescence it was therefore quite natural that he should begin to respond in a similar manner under the influence of his father and his religious friends. To Parmoor's London house in Wilton Crescent came friends from the upper reaches of the Church and politics who were deeply interested in the "World Alliance to promote international friendship through the churches" and the "Fight the Famine Council". Stafford Cripps was drawn into these discussions at Wilton Crescent and often, too, they were held at "Goodfellows". As a result of their growing interest in these discussions Stafford and Isobel Cripps joined the Alliance and on the occasion of the Copenhagen Conference of the World Alliance in 1922, when Doctor Burge was appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to represent the Church of England, they went with him to the Conference.

Of course, Stafford was not approaching the questions raised there as a mere sentimentalist. He knew the legal background of international law and it is possible from an intellectual point of view his decision to join the World Alliance was not a little due to Hugo Grotius, revered as the founder of international law. The masterpiece of Hugo Grotius (another great churchman) on international law is contained in an epistle addressed to Louis XIII in which he declared that justice must enter into her own in international affairs in order that the arm of international contract and good faith may be strengthened, and then, with princes satisfied as to the material and moral expediency of peace, even the widest international difference might be composed, if not by the parties themselves, then by arbitrators, or even international conferences.

After Grotius had issued his treatise, he turned away from law to quest for Christian Union—to the "visible Unity of Christendom". Many students of history believe that this line of behaviour was the result of Grotius' recognition that international law, unsupported by the concerted application of Christian principle and doctrine to human society, would be ineffective. There is no doubt that this line of argument appealed to Cripps. He was sure that the Covenant of the League of Nations would not work of itself: motive power was necessary. The only way in which the inefficient judicial machinery for fighting war could be made

effective was by anticipating the causes of war, the misunderstandings, the suspicions, the unscrupulousness which both in national and international society lead to strife, and the application of Christian principles thereto. This, according to Bishop Burge, was the work which individuals or bodies professing the religion of Christ, pledged to be His disciples, were called upon to do.

Hence, fired now by the enthusiasm of the meeting and its potential promise for England, Cripps, on his return from the Copenhagen Conference, determined to organise the British Council of the World Alliance on more ambitious and determined lines than then existed. "Once Stafford Cripps' mind is made up on an issue," a personal friend of Cripps has remarked, "he expects results the day before yesterday." This is true of him to-day, it was equally so in 1922. Indeed, Doctor Burge, then Bishop of Oxford, was forced to place a restraining hand on him to approach cautiously the rebuilding of the World Alliance with a powerful British Council. Burge reported to Cripps in a letter dated October 2nd, 1922:

"I am afraid that at Lambeth [headquarters of the Church of England] they do not really appreciate in the least what the inwardness of the Alliance really is, nor the position into which the World Alliance may drift. It seems to be treated as if it were simply one amongst a number of benevolent societies. . . but . . . we need not by any means despair at the moment."

Burge counselled Cripps against despair at the Churches' possible do-nothing attitude by adding he had reassured Lambeth that it "would be disastrous if anything was done which seemed to be scrapping or superseding the World Alliance." Thus the way was paved for Cripps, guided by Burge and Parmoor, to buttress the Alliance in Britain. The following spring, Cripps was elected to represent the Oxford Diocesan Conference of the National Assembly of the Church of England. Congratulating his son on the election, Lord Parmoor wrote that.

"Apart from my desire to see you a Member of the National Assembly, the National Assembly must be recruited from a younger generation, ready and able to work, if it is to survive as a real force. It is specially necessary to increase the strength of the House of the Larty."

If Cripps is impatient and expects immediate action when a policy has been defined, he is, at the very least, the hardest worker for that same cause. Between 1923 and 1929 Cripps



delivered scores of speeches for the World Alliance. The typical Cripps outlook of this time can best be portrayed by presenting a précis of the pattern which was adopted in these speeches. They generally commenced with an account of the endeavours through the centuries to eliminate force from international life as it has been eliminated from national life. The various deterrents which have been tried are listed, the strong man armed, the balance of power, international police. But all these are unsatisfactory because all are based on force. The only sanction which is stronger than force and has not yet been tried is love—love and Christianity. The churches should be the true protagonists of peace, the churches must organise for peace. There follows a brief history of the origin and development of the World Alliance, a sketch of its contemporary work on such questions as religious minorities and disarmament, and an account of the special tasks of the British Council. The aims of the Alliance are then stated as the creation of an international Christian conscience and the application of Christ's teaching to our relations with other nations, as we already seek to apply it to our everyday life. The difficulties in the way are listed as "parochialism", unfamiliarity with thinking internationally, ignorance of how the foreigner lives and thinks, and the poisonous prejudices spread by the press against foreign countries. There is no conflict, it is maintained, between patriotism and Christian internationalism. True patriotism does not mean aggressiveness, bullying. Loving our country does not mean hating and despising all other countries—just as loving one's own family does not mean hating all one's neighbours. Family, parish, country, world loyalties are complementary, not contradictory. To carry all this out needs faith and energy, not lip service. The churches must give a lead, as Bolshevism gives a different kind of lead. Otherwise youth will drift away from Christianity. But difficulties cannot overcome the truly Christian spirit.

Cripps revealed his own credo, his own individuality, through these speeches. Sentiments expressed at this time furnish us with invaluable clues to Cripps' personality and help us to understand in great measure why he acted as he did in subsequent years. So far as the Gospel of Christianity is concerned, there is the lengthy Cripps tradition of ecclesiastical interest and Parmoor's intense religiosity. Both Cripps' mother and Parmoor constantly advocated freedom from parochialism. Cripps' understanding of foreigners might also be due to his many travels abroad and to the fact that many foreign churchmen,

legalists, jurists and politicians came regularly to Parmoor during Cripps' youth. His advocacy of thinking through a problem and living out the conclusions is Cripps' own contribution. That Cripps has insisted on living out his beliefs, that he has been aware of his Christian duty and that his life is of a one-ness unusual in life and positively unique in politics, is the result of that mysterious alchemy, personal, indefinable, which distinguishes one individual from another. Inheritance? Being the youngest in a family, dispossessed of maternal affection at the age of four, undue self-reliance, called "Dad" at an early age? These may be psychological indices they do not explain. Theresa Cripps bore Charles Alfred Cripps four sons, and one daughter, apart from a relatively similar upbringing and enjoyment of amenities Stafford is as different from his three brothers as might be any strangers.

Cripps' church activities at this time involved not only his duties as Treasurer of the Alliance (which involved raising sums of money for this body, which was invariably in financial straits—asking Parmoor for contributions and contributing goodly sums himself) but assisting the Bishop of Oxford in ironing out difficulties in a parish where the rector and the Parochial Church Council did not seem to work together, attending rural diocesan conferences, meetings of the National Assembly, and trying to get the bishops in his own Church to take collective action on the burning issues of the day. Although he remained a member of the Assembly until 1929 he became disappointed with the results of his campaigning for the Alliance. The dilatory attitude of both the laity and the clergy in facing the problems of the age depressed him.

Great changes were also taking place in the ranks of the Alliance. Lord Curzon, who had supported Lord Parmoor's motion for the League of Nations in the House of Lords, and Doctor Burge, Bishop of Oxford, both died in 1925. The loss of Doctor Burge in particular was a severe blow to the Cripps family. That he had exercised a great influence on his friend Parmoor, and on the shaping of the outlook of Stafford, is indisputable. Writing on June 15th, 1925, at the time of Doctor Burge's death, Lord Parmoor said:

"His courage in the cause of peace and love never failed, and there has spread around him an atmosphere of Christian love and content, bringing peace to the soul, and now we know that he is at rest. He was not only an idealist holding out help to everyone, but with his idealism was a desire

to promote movements of real practical value, and to bring together both Christian hopes and Christian progress in the direction of positive peace-making. His value as a great spiritual leader was brought out in his work for the World Alliance, where he did more than any other person to encourage the Alliance in human Christian love. It was an important part of his character that in searching for a higher idealism he was not content to rest until he felt that the cause which he earnestly desired was being pressed forward in some practical scheme which gave him the prospect of making Church work and life part of the life of each Christian."

These losses and disappointments caused Stafford to look in other directions. In his earlier speeches under the auspices of the World Alliance he was wont to say that "everyone turns to Christianity on the failure of the politicians", but it was becoming increasingly clear to his pragmatic mind that he would have to turn from the Church to politics to apply his Christianity.

And much had happened in the larger world of affairs since 1922, when Doctor Burge held him in leash with kindly warnings lest his burning enthusiasm to set the churches aflame with the gospel of disarmament and peace become too precipitate. In that year Lloyd George's Coalition Government ceased to cohere. The trade depression was almost at its worst and the Trade Unions, which had gone through two years of industrial defeats, swung into political action behind the Labour Party in the November elections of that year, returning 142 Labour members to Parliament. Then, in the December elections of 1923, the Labour vote rose to 4,348,379 and returned 191 Members of Parliament. The Liberals secured 157 seats and the Tories 258. With the consent of the Liberals, the first Labour Government was formed with Mr Ramsay MacDonald as the Prime Minister.

This was an event for the Cripps household and relatives. MacDonald wrote to Stafford's father immediately after the election.

"MY DEAR LORD PARMOOR,

"If I have to try my hand at Ministry making would you be disposed to help me by taking office, say, the Lord President? Or would you come into a more active office like, say, India? Of course this is purely tentative and is by way of sounding you. Perhaps you would be good enough to let me know without delay.

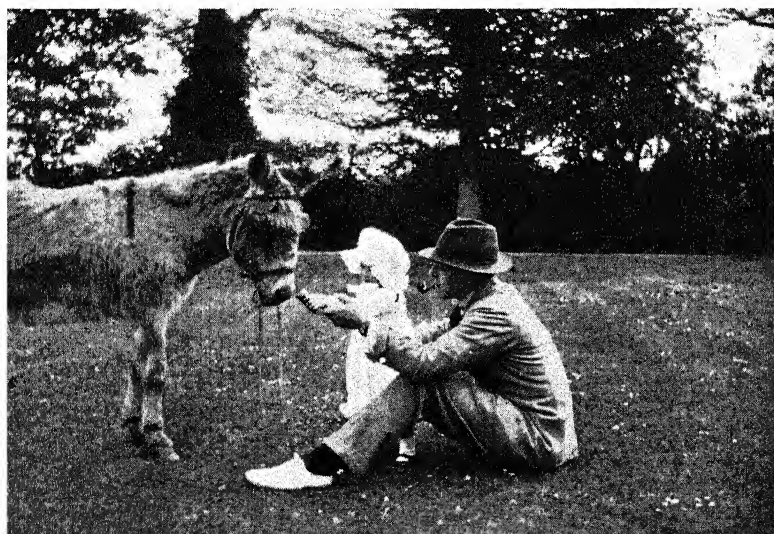
"May I add this? I want to gain the confidence of the country and shall suit my policy accordingly. If you could see your way to help me



WITH JOHN AND DIANA



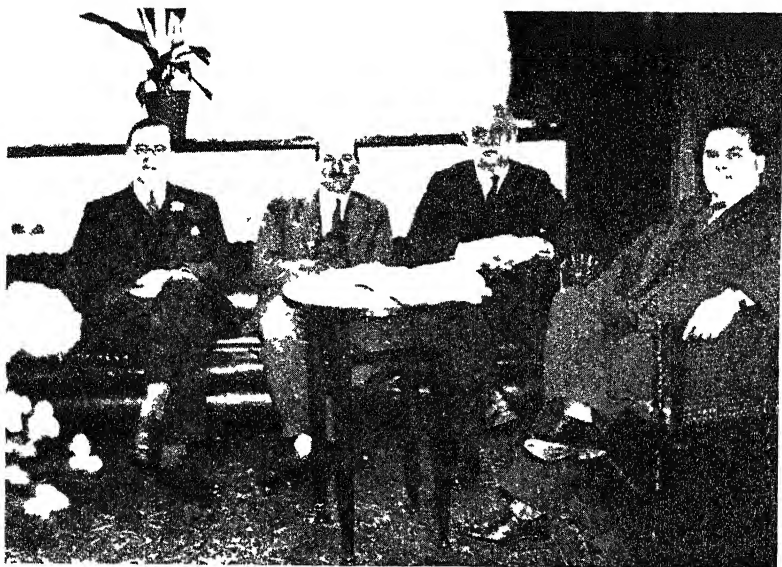
WITH DIANA, THERESA AND  
JOHN



WITH JOHN



STAFFORD (*centre*) TAKES SILK IN 1927, D N PRITT (*right*)  
(Photo Barratt's Photo Press)



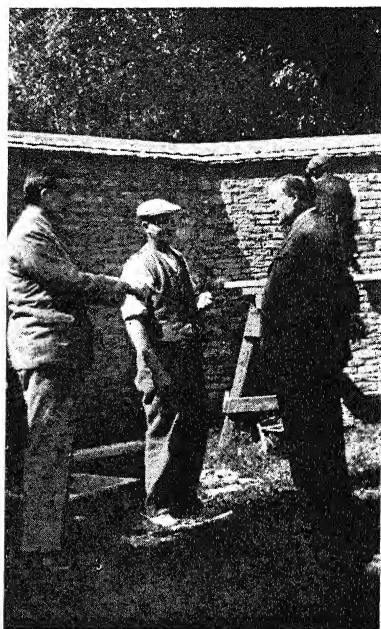
WITH CLEMENT ATTLEE AND GEORGE LANSBURY



WITH HERBERT MORRISON (*centre*), MR AND MRS DRAKE AND  
DAUGHTER PEGGY



WITH AUNT AND UNCLE,  
BEATRICE AND SIDNEY WEBB



WITH ERNEST BEVIN



WITH (*left to right*) DAVID LEWIS, ANUERIN BEVAN AND GEOFFREY  
WILSON. THREE SNAPSHOTS AT GOODFELLOWS



my great personal regard for you would be richly gratified, and I venture to say that you might be doing a useful service to the country. I always remember a talk I had with you by the fire in the Aye Lobby when we sat opposite to each other in the House.

‘My very best wishes for a good New Year to you,

“Yours very sincerely,

“J. RAMSAY MACDONALD”

Lord Parmoor replied immediately expressing his deep interest in foreign affairs and sought specific assurance from MacDonald as to their agreement on foreign policy. The outcome was that Parmoor became Lord President of the Council and was placed in charge of Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords. Cripps’ uncle, Sidney Webb (later Lord Passfield), was appointed President of the Board of Trade—a post to be occupied by Cripps himself twenty-one years later. Stafford was greatly interested in these events and congratulated his father and uncle on their appointments to such high positions. On January 24th, 1924, he received a letter from his aunt, Beatrice, saying.

“MY DEAR STAFFORD,

“Sidney was delighted to get your note of congratulation. What a joke it is, your father and he in a Cabinet together. How pleased your mother would have been—I think all the more gratified because it is a Labour Government. She was never keen about Conservative politics, and always looked forward to a re-organised society. It will be very interesting to hear your father’s impressions of this strangely assorted group of men coming from all sections of the community.

“Affectionately yrs,

“BEATRICE WEBB.”

The Labour Government was short-lived, followed by a Tory Government. Domestic events superseded all interest in disarmament and the prevention of another war. The new Conservative administration deemed the time had arrived for Britain to return to the “Gold Standard”, from which it had been compelled to depart during the war of 1914-18. That meant, as Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister of the day, put it, that “all the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet.”

Although the Trade Unions had lost heavily in membership during the great debacle of the years 1921 and 1922, recovery had set in during 1923 and during the year of the Labour Government in 1924. That year had been memorable not only



for the fact that for the first time in British history the Labour Party had formed the Government but also for the renewal of enthusiasm in the Trade Unions. When, therefore, this new challenge on the economic front came along the will to resist the demands of the employers and the Tory Government was exceedingly strong. As in the previous attack on the workers in 1921, the Government started their offensive against the miners, who laboured in a key export industry. To the surprise of the Government and even of the Trade Union leaders, the whole of the Trade Union movement rallied to support the miners. The "Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport Workers" threatened to strike together. The Government were not ready to face what would have been a large-scale beginning of a General Strike. They retreated by advancing a subsidy of £30,000,000 to the mine-owners to cover a period of nine months during which time the mine-owners could maintain the existing rates of wages in the industry, new proposals for dealing with the industry were to be prepared in the interim period, known as "The Nine Months Truce". The day when the Government conceded these terms was called "Red Friday", to set against the memory of the failure of the Alliance in 1921, which also occurred on a Friday, and was called "Black Friday".

Of course during a "Nine Months Truce" both sides could have prepared. The only side which did prepare was the Government. Against the day of national emergency when the truce should end, the whole country was organised into ten divisions, each under a civil commissioner, with complete staffs of civil servants for all departments. A strike-breaking body, the "Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies" was set up and trained. Mobile squads of police were prepared and special transport held in readiness. All was to be set in motion by the one-word telegram from Whitehall—"Action".

There was great perturbation in the Cripps circle although Stafford as yet was a "looker-on". Beatrice Webb wrote to Lord Parmoor on December 25th a letter conveying her concern about the course of things. She said:

"MY DEAR ALFRED,

". . . What we have all to fear is what will happen in May—I gather that the Coal Commission is not going to show any decided lead—but of course we do not know any more than other people. If they were to recommend a lengthening of hours and lowering of wages and fail to produce any kind of plan for the re-organisation of the industry and the

pooling of the profits, I am afraid it is a bad look out, and the miners, at any rate, will be locked out. I doubt whether the other unions—the N U R for instance—will venture a sympathetic strike. And I am not sure that I want them to do so. . .

“Affectionately yrs,

“BEATRICE WEBB ”

The situation rapidly became grimmer and more complex than Beatrice Webb ever dreamed. The General Staff of the Unions did not want to fight. It never entered their heads that there would be a fight. The fight was thrust upon them. After the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives had spent two days singing hymns while the leaders “begged and pleaded”, seeking for a reasonable way to capitulate without a fight, the delegates were told by Mr. Ernest Bevin, leader of the Transport and General Workers’ Union, that the General Strike notices must operate, and the delegates should go home and take things quietly. To their consternation, the spirit of the workers outside the conference hall and throughout the country was the opposite of that of their leaders. For nine days the strike remained solid and “beyond expectations”. Desperately, the General Staff repudiated all “unconstitutional intentions” and all revolutionary implications.

On the ninth day, when the strike was about to extend and the temper of the workers was rising and not falling, a sombre procession of Mr. Pugh, Mr. Bevin and Mr. Thomas wended its way to the feet of Mr. Baldwin and capitulated—“unconditionally surrendered” in a fight they never intended to wage.

It was on that day, May 11th, 1926, one of the most fateful days in British Labour history, a London clergyman wrote to Stafford Cripps

“I am writing of the widespread perplexity among the London clergymen as to what they ought to say or not to say, at the conclusion of the strike, and am trying to get a few level-headed Churchmen together. . . our object will be to formulate some hints as to the best line to be adopted and what questions had better be avoided. Can you spare the time to attend? This effort is well worth while, as our Labour people have generally misunderstood what Church people have said in the past, and with deplorable results.”

“And with good reason” Cripps might have replied. But we find him raising funds to help succour the women and children

of the miners. Some years later he expressed himself in very clear terms about this strike, and said

"The most nearly revolutionary incident in our post-war history was the General Strike of 1926. The strike was undertaken for political purposes, though it was expressed in industrial terms. The miners' problem of wages and hours was an industrial problem, but the Government had come to the aid of the mine-owners to assist them in the acute difficulties caused to our coal export trade by the return to the gold standard and the post-war economic conditions of other countries who had been our customers. It was because the demand made was implicitly for some fresh Government action to solve the problems confronting the mining industry, and the mine-owners in particular, that the General Strike took place, and necessarily constituted a challenge to the Government of the day. Undoubtedly they who organised and ordered that strike ought to have realised that they were adopting revolutionary tactics. Had it succeeded, it could only have been upon the basis that the workers had compelled the Government by direct, as distinguished from Parliamentary, action to do as they wished.

"It failed, not because the response of the workers as a whole weakened, but because those who were responsible for its leadership realised, too late, the full implications of their own actions. It was fear of success and not of failure that caused the strike to be called off."

The outlook in the Cripps family circles at the time can be seen in the reflections of Beatrice Webb to Parmoor. Writing to him on August 6th, 1926, she said

"MY DEAR ALFRED,

"... The miners' situation is very ominous of further trouble. It is really difficult to decide which of the three parties concerned—the Government, the mine-owners, and the miners—have been the worst led. It makes one despair of British good sense to see the way in which they are destroying their own positions. . . . It would be so easy to fix up a truce with a subsidy, and yet, owing to the indefiniteness and bad faith of the Government and evil influence of Mr. Cook on the miners, nothing might come of it when the subsidy terminated. . . .

"BEATRICE WEBB"

The miners continued to stand fast for seven months, and then, exhausted and deserted, they gave way. Their hours of labour were lengthened, their wages reduced, and they were thrust lower down in the standards of British industrial wage labour than they had ever been.

The Trades Union Congress met, justified the General Council in the strike, severed the Anglo-Russian Trades Union Unity Committee because the Russians had denounced their leadership of the General Strike as a betrayal of the workers. Now began the period of what were known as the Mond-Turner agreements between the Unions and the Federation of British Industries. Sir Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett) and a group of leading industrialists had responded thus

"The prosperity of industry can be fully attained only by full and frank recognition of the facts as they exist and an equally full and frank determination to increase the competitive power of British industries in the world's market "

Having severed the bonds of unity with working-class movements internationally, and renounced all class struggle associations and policies at home, the working class lay helpless before the onslaught of the Government and employers. The Government proceeded at once with the Trades Disputes Act, regarded later by Sir Stafford Cripps as the first definite and conscious step in the direction of Fascism in England. By this Act, the General Strike was made illegal, all strikes were made illegal if they extended beyond the limits of a single industry, political strikes were made illegal, the unions of Civil Service employees were compelled to sever their connections with the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party; the finances of the Labour Party were dealt a most severe blow. Up to the passing of this Act the majority vote of any union favouring affiliation to the Labour Party affiliated all the members with the exception of those individuals who made a written declaration objecting to affiliation. The 1927 Act reversed the process. Every member of a union who wished to be affiliated to the Labour Party had to sign a document to that effect.

Nevertheless the working class recovered from its defeats. The tide turned again and raised the Labour Party to heights it did not expect.

Parliament was dissolved on May 10th, 1929. After four and a half years of Mr Baldwin, who had provoked the General Strike of 1926, the British people were looking for a change. The Representation of the People Act of 1928, which for the first time enfranchised men and women of twenty-one years of age and upwards, increased the electorate by more than six million voters. In the General Election the Labour Party received 8,364,883 votes and returned 288 members to Parliament. The

Conservatives, with 8,664,243 votes, returned 261 members, having lost 139 seats. The Liberals polled 5,300,947 votes and returned only forty-seven members to Parliament.

Again the Labour Party formed a Government in the precarious position wherein a combination of Tories and Liberals could bring its downfall at will. MacDonald once more formed the Government, and this time Lord Parmoor had the double honour of becoming Lord President of the Council and Labour's Leader in the House of Lords. Stafford's uncle, Sidney Webb, now Lord Passfield, was named the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This time MacDonald did not perform the dual function of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Arthur Henderson became Foreign Secretary, George Lansbury, who was to become a close personal friend of Stafford, became the Commissioner of Works. Mr Herbert Morrison, with whom Stafford had become acquainted while conducting cases for the London County Council, became Minister of Transport.

When they thus rode into office once again, full of enthusiasm engendered by their victory, they were as happy as could be, believing that the days of crisis were over. Their outlook was fully in accord with that of the American President, Mr Herbert Hoover, who in this same period declared

“the outlook for the world to-day is for the greatest era of commercial expansion in history. . . unemployment in the sense of distress is finally disappearing, we in America to-day are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land.”

So things would go on from boom to boom and no “slump”. So thought the Labour Government, too, and its credo contained a running buffet providing everything from pure Socialism to impure reformism, from Utopian idealism to sound financial orthodoxy.

It was in 1929, as these great changes reached their culmination in the formation of the second Labour Government, that Stafford Cripps became convinced that the changes he most desired to see in human relations could be effected only by political means, and that the Church in these matters had become an effete institution. This is how he stated his position a little later on.

“I want to address myself bluntly and frankly to that perennial problem of the duty of the Christian Churches towards the great political and economic issues that face us as citizens of our country and the world

today Let me briefly review what contribution Christianity has made to world affairs during the last twelve months

"A thousand Chinese slaughtered in one day in Hankow the suffering of our people in the distressed areas, the continued starvation of the unemployed, the shooting of people in India, similar tragedies in the West Indies And what has the organised body of Christians done? Nothing—at least nothing that has had the slightest impact upon the forces of materialism that are responsible for those outrages on civilisation "

Here we have the moral revolt of the conscientious Christian to the Church, as an institution, in a state of spiritual inertia His experience as a lawyer confirmed his experience in the "World Alliance", that he must look elsewhere than to the Church for an effective means for the practice of his Christianity He said of this experience

"My professional work in connection with the acquisition of land for housing schemes and for new municipal enterprises of all kinds, especially in and around London, took me to slum areas, of the meaning of which I had before been completely unconscious, though I had lived and worked in London all my life! I discovered that in this country of ours, the conditions of the workers were appallingly bad I had long been familiar with the disease-ridden hovels which in many country areas passed for houses, and the tragically low wage levels of the agricultural workers But for the first time I began to appreciate what the urban slums really signified in terms of suffering, starvation and ill health "

To Herbert Morrison, however, goes much of the credit for bringing Cripps into the Labour Party fold Writing to Lord Parmoor on April 12th, 1929, he said

" For some time I have been wondering if there is any possibility of your son, Stafford Cripps, joining the Labour Party I have been watching his legal work with interest and admiration and our people admire his splendid work on the London Traffic Bills It is one of my ambitions to see Stafford Cripps in the Labour Party, I did sound him on the subject some while ago, but he was not clear and I am wondering if it might be useful for me to have another talk with him . "

A week later Morrison decided to make the direct approach and wrote to Stafford:

"You will remember that some time ago I sounded you on the possibility of you joining the Party I was aware of the professional con-

siderations which arise but I am personally very anxious to have you in the Party

"Please let me know if and when you would like to join the ranks of the Party and I shall be very happy to make the necessary arrangements, but of course I greatly respect your own scrupulousness in not intending to join the Labour Party until you are quite clear in your own mind that you accept our principles and our policy "

Stafford was conscious that he had now reached a decisive stage in his career. There was little of doubt in his mind that from a practical Christian's point of view the programme and the policy of the Labour Party was right and he would support it. But it was another matter to decide that henceforth he should so apportion his time that sooner or later he would devote himself exclusively to political work and one day, not too far distant, leave even his legal career behind him. It was for him a crisis hour and it entered into his home. There were days and nights of discussion with his wife, Isobel. Together they talked over all that the decision would mean. He was a considerable figure in the legal world. He was high in the councils of the Church. He had devoted much attention to the management of "Goodfellows" farm. And what would become of his hobby of furniture-making in the carpenter's shop? Then, what too of the children, who were growing up and would need his guidance more, rather than less, as they grew? If he decided to "enter politics" wouldn't it disrupt the home life, take him more and more away from "Goodfellows" and all and everything that made up their home life there? There were only twenty-four hours in a day and if he decided in the affirmative something would have to go. There would be no more furniture-making, no more farm management, little time for home affairs and the children, except during brief and irregular holidays. It would mean, too, that he and his wife would have to adjust their lives to entirely new circumstances. Of course, her mind was clear enough on the matter. The decision must be Stafford's and he knew that just as she had been his "good companion" in all phases of their married life so she would remain in political life, fostering his ambitions in this direction as she had done in the old ones.

They knew that life would never again be the same. But the die was cast. Stafford Cripps became a member of the Labour Party.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE NEW LABOUR LEADER

MORRISON, now anxious to push Stafford forward into active party work which would lead inevitably to his adoption by a constituency, as a preliminary to a Parliamentary candidature, wrote to him again on July 16th, 1929, after the Labour Party's electoral victory

"I did speak to our people at West Woolwich with regard to yourself I have no doubt you have the electoral history of the constituency since 1918 from which you will see that there has been a consistent growth in the Labour vote and that we nearly won at this recent election. The character of the constituency has changed in recent years owing to the establishment of the Woolwich Borough Council Housing Estate and it is probable that the number of working-class electors will tend to increase although there is some middle-class development also

"I am sure you will not mind me reminding you that you are young, that if you do not win a constituency in the first fight you have gained valuable experience and other chances will arise later. I do feel, however, that there is a real substantial chance to win West Woolwich at the next election and that you would be an excellent candidate for the next place."

There are many indications that Cripps regarded Morrison's advice as sound. Addressing one of his brief notes to his son, Parmoor wrote on September 8th, 1929:

"MY DEAR STAFF,

"Your Uncle Sidney and Aunt Beatrice were here last night and we had an interesting talk, amongst other matters the question arose of a proper London constituency for you. I rather wish you had been here, and seen them. They have a very sympathetic attitude to your claims."

The "stars in their courses" were for him. He accepted the invitation to become the "Prospective Labour Candidate for West Woolwich" and before the constitutional preliminaries for his official adoption had been arranged, he became the cynosure of all eyes in the Labour Movement. A Mr. J. J. Moses had been



elected Member of Parliament for the Drake Division of Plymouth, and his opponent tried to unseat him by accusing him of corrupt practices in the course of the election. A Parliamentary Election Petition was served against Mr Moses and he had to appear as the defendant in a court of law. If the charge was upheld, he would be unseated.

This was the first time in the history of the Labour Party that an action of this kind had been taken against one of its members and it was of great importance that Mr Moses should be well defended. But where was the first-class lawyer to be obtained for the defence and where was the money to pay him? Into the breach stepped Cripps, offering his services without charge.

The election law of Britain is not a simple matter. Complexities abound and pitfalls await the unwary. This field of law was not one of Stafford's specialities. But he marshalled his data and handled his case with masterly ease. Judgment was given in favour of Mr Moses and the spotlight of another legal triumph fell on the new member of the Labour Party who was about to become the prospective candidate for West Woolwich.

A 1929 Christmas message includes an interesting memoir of Parmoor's continuing interest in his son's political future.

"I was introducing Arthur Greenwood and Ramsay MacDonald to the King a short time ago, that they might be made Privy Councillors. This gave me the chance of a talk with them and they both spoke very highly of your law work and progress giving me as a Father much satisfaction and pride. When Christmas time is over come and have a talk. My own time for public work is running out as it naturally would, but if the Government weathers the various storms, I shall go on with my colleagues, and not desert them."

Lord Parmoor was seventy-eight years of age when this message was written.

As soon as Stafford had been adopted as prospective candidate for West Woolwich, he began to make himself acquainted with the people of his constituency. There is a great similarity of sentiment in these speeches of his new campaign with those of the earlier "World Alliance" speeches. But there are new notes.

In his 1930 speeches, war no longer appears as the only, nor even the primary, social evil of the present day. Unemployment figures prominently. Through the speeches runs the leitmotif of "humanisation"—humanisation of unemployment relief, humanisation of pensions, humanisation of housing conditions, of relations in industry, of international relations. His Socialism

at this time was of the kind which appealed to Mr MacDonald, whose ideal was that of the enlightened landowner, who out of the goodness of his heart cared for the welfare and the "raising of the cultural level" of the workers. If all landowners followed Cripps' example MacDonald's dream would have come true. For, it was in the spring of 1930 that the Witney Rural District Council decided to build four new houses in Cripps' own village of Filkins. They were to be modern houses, built of bricks and mortar—and utterly out of keeping with the native stone architecture of the Cotswolds.

Of all men Stafford loved the Cotswolds. Witness his own poem about them

"O Brave                      Cotswolds  
 Rolling hill on hill,  
 Grey in sober strength,  
 Flecked with sun-kissed hamlets  
 Nestling in deep-furrowed valleys,  
 Pasturing the free-browsing flocks  
 Whose golden fleeces once  
 Brought uncounted wealth  
 And gave your craftsmen power to build  
 Slender-spired churches and grey grouped homes  
 Whose beauty yet bedecks your loveliness"

No wonder, therefore, that the proposal of the District Council distressed him. A solution must be found. Afterwards, a local newspaper was able to declare that

"Everyone was against it, but what could be done? The Honourable R. Stafford Cripps, K.C., who lives in the village, came to the rescue. He approached the Rural District Council, and it was ultimately decided that he should be allowed to erect the houses if he agreed to pay the difference in cost between building them in brick and building them in Cotswold stone. Cripps immediately set to work. The stone was quarried on his own estate, all the labourers, including the foreman mason, were his workers. The architect was Mr R. Morley Horder. The houses were finally built at a cost of £444 apiece, only a fraction above the price of the vermilion eyesores. They were opened by Mr Greenwood, Minister of Health, and created a considerable stir in the building world."

That was for Stafford "practical Christianity" and also practical Socialism. But he was soon to be tested in the arena of national politics. Toward the end of 1930, Sir James Melville, the Solicitor-General in the MacDonald Government became

seriously ill and resigned MacDonald appointed Cripps as the new Solicitor-General. The appointment pleased Herbert Morrison as well as Lord Parmoor. Writing to the latter Morrison said

"Nobody was more glad than I was with the appointment of the new Solicitor-General because I know that Stafford has no personal ends and I have a very high opinion of his ability. It is a good thing for the Party."

On his appointment Stafford was made a knight, as is the custom in this position. But he could not take his place in the House of Commons until elected. Sidney Webb wrote to Parmoor

"We were delighted to see the announcement of the new Solicitor-General. I assume that the proper attempts are being made to find him a seat."

"The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on." Shortly after Stafford's appointment, Mr W. T. Baker, the Labour Member of Parliament for East Bristol, died. With one accord, the Executive of the Party sought the adoption of Sir Stafford Cripps by this constituency. A meeting of the Executive Committee and General Council of the East Bristol Labour Party was specially convened on December 13th, 1930. The National Organiser of the Party attended. He said: "I urge the local Party, nay, I implore you, to accept him."

It was not so easy a matter to persuade this working-class party of East Bristol to adopt such a course. The opposition was led by Alderman Hennessy, who was later to become one of Cripps' staunchest supporters. He and others objected to the Executive's method of dumping on to them a rich man, an aristocrat and a knight. Councillor Herbert Rogers of East Bristol writes

"The workers of East Bristol had always been regarded as very radically-minded and there was considerable doubt in the minds of Alderman Hennessy and others as to the reactions of the workers generally, together with his own prejudice, which were very proletarian."

Nevertheless, Sir Stafford was adopted as the candidate and as soon as he got into his stride in the by-election campaign, he won the whole-hearted support of those who had previously opposed him. On January 16th, 1931, he polled 19,261 votes; the Tory candidate polled 7,937 votes and the Liberal 4,010.

Four days later the forty-one-year-old Solicitor-General stood before the Speaker of the House of Commons. On his right was the Attorney-General, Sir William Jowitt. On his left stood the chief "Whip" of the Labour Party. All eyes were on him as, with Bible in hand, he bowed to the Speaker and swore allegiance to the Crown.

Four days afterwards, from the Government's Front Bench, he delivered his maiden speech by introducing the Solicitors' (Clients' Accounts) Bill. With that calm, confident assurance of one who is the master of his subject, he clearly and quietly explained the Bill and the reasons for the measure. It was obvious to the members of all parties in the House that in this tall, slim, be-spectacled lawyer a new leader of men was in their midst.

Parliamentary oratory is quite different from that of the public platform, where one must know how to stir the hearts of the people, as well as satisfy their minds, where heat is more essential than light and emotion more convincing than logic. The House of Commons calls for a different kind of oratory in which the powers of analysis and logical construction, quick-thinking repartee and mastery of subject, transcend emotionalism. Indeed emotion must be reserved for the well-chosen occasion, emerge from deep feeling and conviction and be kept under control. Woe betide the speaker who too frequently mixes too much emotion with too little logic and less knowledge of his subject. He will be quickly dismissed as a windbag and find himself speaking to an empty House. The new Solicitor-General was not likely to find himself in the latter category. Trained to think as an experimental scientist in the chemical laboratories of Sir William Ramsay, with years of practice as an exponent of commercial and patent law before the most learned judges of the day, he at once stepped into the front ranks of Parliamentary orators. Lucid in exposition, calm in presentation, with a rich, cultured voice that was at its best in the conversational tones most suited to the House of Commons as an auditorium and debating chamber, Sir Stafford was at home from the beginning. He leapt at one bound from the front rank of law administration into the front rank of the lawmakers. The King's Counsel of the Courts had become the lawyer-politician and leader.

As Solicitor-General he must fight cases in the courts on behalf of the Crown, he must advise Ministers and Government departments on the legality of proposed legislation and guide and

direct Bills through the House of Commons. As a lawyer he had to become a politician, as a politician he was still a lawyer. His briefs were different and his audience was different. It was not he who decided the cases he must now fight in the courts, or the Bills he should introduce, or the policy incorporated in them. He had to be, in this apprentice stage of his political career, the voice of the Labour Government and, through it, the voice of the Labour Party, of whose history and social motivation he knew relatively little.

The brief which had given him the opportunity to make his maiden speech was an easy one. After all, the Solicitors' (Clients' Accounts) Bill dealt with the interests of his own legal fraternity. His real triumph came quickly afterwards when he with Philip Snowden, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, piloted the Taxation of Land Values Bill through the House of Commons. Snowden wrote to him

"April 30, 1931

"DEAR SOLICITOR-GENERAL,

"I am most grateful for all the time you have given to the question of land values and for the very valuable work you have done on it. I should be much obliged if you would support me on the Front Bench during the debate to-day on the special resolution and during the debates next week on the resolution authorising the imposition of the tax in Committee of Ways and Means and on Report.

"Yours sincerely,

"PHILIP SNOWDEN "

There is probably no country with such a complex system of land tenure as that of Great Britain. Sir Stafford's job was to defend the principle of the taxation of land values. It is well known that the market value of land increases, whether anything is done to it or not, with the growth of social life around it. It was now proposed that the community should derive some of the benefit thus accruing by means of placing a tax on the value of land. Stafford had to explain all the technicalities of the proposed land valuation and the means whereby the new tax would be collected.

On introducing the Land Values Bill, he said

"It is a just means of securing to the community as a whole some part of the wealth which that community has created, and at the same time rendering more free and equitable the sales of land, especially in those cases where land is required for the use of the community."

Everyone who heard this speech recognised the ring of conviction in the tone of the speech. When, on a hot day in July, the Bill was accepted by the House of Commons, famous lawyers from the ranks of the Opposition paid tribute to the skill of the new leader in their midst. Sir John Simon the famous lawyer-politician said on behalf of the Liberal Opposition

"The Government in carrying this measure through the House of Commons have had the great assistance of a most notable Parliamentary performance in the work of the Solicitor-General "

But a still greater tribute came from Mr Lloyd George, the Father of the House, another lawyer-politician of great standing. He said

"I should like to begin by saying something with which, I think, the whole House will agree, and that is to join with those who have paid tribute to the extraordinary skill with which the learned Solicitor-General has undertaken what I know from experience is an extraordinarily difficult and complicated subject to handle, whether a Bill is right or wrong

"The learned Solicitor-General has extolled himself with a skill which has undoubtedly lifted him to the rank of one of the most distinguished Parliamentarians of this generation "

Nor did the tributes end there. As Mr Stanley Baldwin saw Sir Stafford walk into one of the smoking-rooms of the House later in the day, he remarked to a friend (this is told by Cripps' brother, Fred) "There comes a future Prime Minister "

Cripps was soon to receive his baptism in another kind of leadership. For in these very days in which he turned to account all his legal skill in the service of the Labour Government, Britain was about to receive the full impact of the "economic blizzard" generated in the United States. Probably no government was more oblivious to the oncoming catastrophe than the second Labour Government. When it did arrive it could only explain that it was the victim of "catastrophic developments which could not possibly have been foreseen." Unable to diagnose the real nature of the crisis, the Labour Government had naturally worked out no concerted policy to meet it. They simply reversed the engines of social legislation and improvised crisis measures as each new blow fell upon them. That which they had promised at the elections did not materialise. The Bill for raising the school leaving age to fifteen was dropped. The

promised Factory Legislation was not produced. The machinery of arbitration was used to lower wages instead of raise them. The Trades Disputes Bill was withdrawn. The Taxation of Land Values Bill on which Stafford had achieved fame never became law. Suddenly it was discovered that the Budget would not balance. Banks in Europe were closing their doors. The Bank of England was being drained of its gold. The "Gold Standard was in danger!" The drain of gold from Britain could be counteracted only by borrowing from France and America, and according to Mr. Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, the French and American bankers imposed the balancing of the Budget as a condition of lending.

The two main suggestions for balancing the Budget were tariffs and economies in the social services, especially of the unemployed relief. Labour's financial theorists would have nothing to do with tariffs. There remained the economies. Mr. Snowden, Chancellor of the Exchequer, set up a committee to recommend the economies. The chairman was Sir George May, late President of the Prudential Assurance Company, and the members were, in the main, businessmen, with Arthur Pugh and Charles Latham as Labour representatives. The committee recommended cuts in public expenditure amounting to £96,000,000. Of this total, £66,000,000 were to be cuts in unemployment benefits, and the remainder mostly summary reductions of pay of schoolteachers, police, the armed forces, health insurance doctors and pharmacists, civil servants, judges and ministers. In addition, other expenditures on public health, secondary and university education, colonial development, and all forms of scientific research were to be reduced to a minimum.

While this report was being studied, Mr. Snowden made the startling announcement (without explanation) that the Budget deficit would amount, not to £120,000,000 as predicted by the May Report, but to £180,000,000. For the first time, rumours were heard of the drain of gold. The £56,000,000 which had already been lent by America and France were rapidly becoming exhausted, and at any moment, reported the Prime Minister, the Bank of England might have to refuse the Treasury the £12,000,000 that was required weekly for the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

The story was spread about that actually the French and American bankers determined the issue. As a condition for their lending the £80,000,000 considered essential to maintain the

gold standard it was said that they had insisted not only that the Budget be balanced, but that this balance be achieved by cuts in unemployment expenditure

The Opposition parties, Tory and Liberal, were having the time of their lives. They rejected the Labour Government's proposed economies as insufficient. They cried loudly about the serious state of the country in the most alarmist fashion.

The Labour Cabinet was appalled at the Opposition's rejection of their proposal. They realised that they were in the hands of the Opposition leaders, since by combining in the House of Commons the Opposition could outvote the Labour Party's Government. Their consent was, therefore, necessary for a decision. The Cabinet sent the Prime Minister again to the Opposition leaders, and again the answer was the same. The Cabinet was in a dilemma. To refuse the Opposition demands meant defeat as soon as the House met again. It might, MacDonald intimated, mean much worse than that if the loan from the French and American bankers was not achieved and confidence not restored. But nothing would induce the Cabinet as a whole to agree to cuts beyond £56,000,000.

The Cabinet met again. It was decided to fight. Every member would rally round the alternative Budget. All would stand together to save the unemployed. They would heed Mr. Lloyd George, who had warned them about his own experience, earlier, as Prime Minister.

"When I went to the City I was received by the City magnates with frigid and flapping silence, as if they were a row of penguins in the Arctic Ocean. Then they said, 'There will be a flight of capital.' And there was. These things can be easily arranged. I beg the Government not to be nervy and jumpy when the City of London threatens."

But Mr. MacDonald had a new shock in store for them. At a Cabinet meeting held on August 23rd he put before its members another ultimatum, this time his own—either accept the cut in unemployment benefits or resign from the Cabinet. As the life of a government is in the hands of a Prime Minister, the Cabinet had no option but to consent to the cuts in unemployment benefit or give up their posts in the Government.

When he had their resignations in his hands, MacDonald rose hastily from the table, announced that he would at once seek audience with the King, inform His Majesty of what had occurred, and advise him to call a conference of Mr. Baldwin, Sir Herbert Samuel and himself for the following day. It should



be noted that before MacDonald demanded the resignation of his Labour colleagues, he knew definitely from both Baldwin and Sir Herbert what the attitude of their respective parties would be toward him and the proposed National Government.

The members of the Labour Government naturally assumed on that Sunday night, August 23rd, that Mr Baldwin would be asked to form a government. But Mr. MacDonald had something quite different in view. Without a word of consultation with his Cabinet colleagues, without even informing them of his intention, Mr. MacDonald proceeded to set up a National Government with himself as Prime Minister, the culmination of a well thought-out plan.

There was an amazing scene when the Cabinet assembled next morning. MacDonald came in and announced that a new Government had been formed—in short, he was in and they were out. He went on to explain that he had consented to be head of a Government which included members of the Conservative and Liberal Parties.

In the words of Mr Henderson at the next meeting of the Labour Party

“the Prime Minister returned from Buckingham Palace and informed us that he had decided to form a National Government. We thanked him and withdrew.”

At this time, the period of summer recess in Parliament and the courts, Stafford Cripps, the Solicitor-General of the Labour Government, was in a sanatorium in Germany receiving treatment for his intestinal ailment and complications arising from it. He was suffering considerably and was expecting to stay on longer.

On Wednesday, August 26th, a telegram addressed to Sir Stafford Cripps, Dr Donglers Sanatorium, Baden-Baden, Germany, “*état priorité absolue*” arrived containing the following message: HOPE YOU PROGRESSING STOP WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO ON—RAMSAY MACDONALD

Stafford returned to England immediately.

On Friday, August 28th, from the Royal Automobile Club in London, Cripps addressed a letter to MacDonald:

“MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

“It was very kind of you to offer me the opportunity to continue in my post as Solicitor-General under the new Government and I am sorry to have had to delay my answer until I came back to this country. I arrived

back last night and immediately took steps to acquaint myself with the political situation. I had a long talk with the Attorney-General last night and this morning the Lord Chancellor has been good enough to spare me an hour to explain the whole position. It is with very great personal regret that I find myself unable to accept your kind offer.

"May I be allowed—without being considered impertinent—to say that I admire immensely the courage and conviction which have led you and other Labour Ministers associated with you to take the action you have taken. My own personal hope is that the rift in the party may be quickly healed and I shall do all I can to attain that end. I should like also to take this opportunity of thanking you most sincerely for your personal kindnesses to me during the past year—kindnesses which I shall always remember.

"It would be unprofitable for me to waste your time with any long explanation of my reasons for not accepting your kind offer and I will content myself with saying that I disagree with the policy of the Labour Party taking any part in a National Government having the programme of the present Government.

"Yours,  
"R. STAFFORD CRIPPS"

How little there was to admire of "courage and conviction" in the decisions of MacDonald and Snowden and Thomas he was soon to learn. But that letter ended chapter one of his political career, in which he had leapt straight into the front ranks of Parliamentary leadership and Government.

On the following day, after it was publicly known that he had refused to follow MacDonald, Cripps received many congratulations, one of which brought from him an interesting reply. It was addressed to his one-time schoolmate at Winchester who had also become a K.C. on the same day as he, D. N. Pritt, and who was at the time of this communication also in the ranks of the Labour Party.

Cripps thanked Pritt for his note, saying—

"I never really had much doubt as to what I should do, but I came straight back to London on getting a telegram from the Prime Minister and saw a great number of people. The only person who really pressed me to stay with the National Government was the Lord Chancellor, but I came to the conclusion that from the point of view of a Socialist future for the country the present Government was a grave mistake. I was extraordinarily sorry for Bill Jowitt, who feels his split with the Labour

Party tremendously and who has gone against all his inclinations because of his personal friendship for Ramsay, and a conviction after seeing those who have stayed with the Government that their action is right "

Stafford had hitched himself to the Labour star and he went with the Party of his choice into opposition. To this latter situation he would apply himself as thoroughly and competently as to the old.

There was no doubt about the affairs of Britain and the world being in a state of crisis. The "Economic Blizzard", originating in the United States, had accentuated every problem left by the war of 1914-18. Unemployment was growing enormously. Foreign trade was slumping. Not only did the Budget not balance but its imports and exports did not balance and the drain of gold to pay for the imports was knocking Britain off the gold standard once again, as it had done before in the First World War. Nor could its Free Trade economy longer stand up to the strain. The Tories and Liberals combined to recover at the expense of social services and wage cuts and to change Britain from a Free Trade country to a tariff country. So profound were the crisis conditions and so clearly defined were the class issues in the measures proposed to deal with the crisis that the Labour Party leaders began to speak the language of class war and of Socialism. There was a feeling of revolt throughout the Labour Movement against the policy of "gradualism", i.e. the slow reform of capitalism into Socialism, personified in the leaders who had deserted the movement. Everybody agreed that the Labour Party must formulate a new policy for the new circumstances.

Stafford Cripps was now to prove himself to be a leader who had something to contribute to the shaping of the policy of the Labour Party. Hitherto he had expounded high principles of brotherhood in international affairs, Christian ethics in social relations, and when he became a member of the Labour Government followed the policy already established by the Labour Party. Now every leader had to think out all questions of policy afresh.

That Cripps was profoundly stirred by the course of events there is no doubt.

Since Parliament was scheduled to meet early in September, Cripps, assured of the support of the Bristol East Labour Party, asked to be excused from addressing a constituency meeting. Writing to his agent, Mr. H. E. Rogers, he said:

"there is a tremendous lot to be done by the Opposition, and I am most anxious to do anything I can to guide them into a constructive Socialist policy "

In a letter to a friend he said

"The moment had arrived when reformism had to be abandoned. It had necessarily increased the difficulties of the capitalists with their rapidly contracting markets, and would no longer be tolerated without the danger of a complete collapse of the whole system. Two paths were open to allow reaction to take charge and to give up concessions which had been extracted from capitalism, or to proceed to risk the breakdown while making a rapid change-over to socialism "

He soon got to grips with the technicalities of finance, party doctrine, economic history as if he had been handed a new brief which he had to prepare for the courts. He had a special regard for William Graham, the extremely able ex-Financial Secretary to the Treasury under Snowden. In the short period he had worked with him on the Front Bench in the House of Commons he had proved a helpful friend to Stafford. Stafford now turned to him to press his point of view and seek his aid to get his opinions before the Executive of the Labour Party which would make the new policy. Graham was a member of that body. Therefore Stafford wrote to Graham:

"There are three things in the present situation which give me serious cause for alarm as regards the future of our Party and the country."

In listing the first of these three things, Cripps wrote

"The attitude of the rank and file of the Party seems to me to be extremely dangerous at the moment. There is a strong tendency to disregard the realities of the situation and to do that which our Party has shown such an inclination to do in the past, that is to use a number of half-digested slogans in place of arguments and to try to avoid the responsibility of putting forward concrete proposals for putting into force the ideas which lie behind the policy of the Party in the circumstances in which we find ourselves to-day. I think a great deal of the future of the Party will depend upon the expression of opinion in the first few weeks of the new Parliament. If our back-benchers get up time after time in the House and reiterate the vague non-constructive statements which so many of them seem to like, the impression upon the country will be fatal to our future success, and I am afraid that with nothing but a single Party meeting, probably of no great duration, before the Parliamentary

fight begins, there will not be time to impress upon our people the absolute necessity for a constructive socialistic plan of coping with the financial situation. I do hope that you and all our other leaders will be able to impress this upon the Party."

He continued

"We are undoubtedly going to be attacked heavily, as you will have observed from some of the National Government speakers' speeches, on the score of the length to which ex-Cabinet Ministers were prepared to go for the purpose of reaching a compromise. This, it seems to me, unless we are extremely careful, will lead to the impression in the country that there is nothing between the policy of the Labour Party and the National Government except certain details as to how to raise the necessary money to balance the Budget, and, as of course you noticed at the Party Meeting, the Independent Labour Party will take full advantage of this to attack the ex-Cabinet Ministers.

"If it is a fact that a General Election is likely to be upon us during the winter it seems absolutely necessary to throw off once and for all the attitude of compromise which was impressed upon us by reason of the minority position in which the Labour Government found itself, and to come out boldly with a slap-up Socialistic policy for dealing with the whole industrial and financial situation. We must, I feel, completely divorce ourselves from the past on the basis that we are now unhampered by the necessity of a compromise with the Liberals and that the recent crisis had shown us that there are only two possible solutions to the difficulties, either a frank reversion to capitalism with its concomitant denudation of social services or a reorganisation of finance and industry on fundamentally socialistic lines and an emergency programme ready to deal with the crisis which will inevitably arise if we come back to power after the General Election . . ."

Here Cripps the pragmatist is getting to work on new problems in the old way—as the lawyer and the experimental scientist. From the study of every brief he had always come forward with a plan of action. He would do the same in the field of economics. He would examine the facts, produce a plan and seek to apply it with all the fervour of the missionary. It would lead him into strange company but that would not perturb him. He would show how to bring order out of chaos. The "planner" was on his way.

The letter to Graham is obviously one of a politically mature person who is thinking his way forward and is not afraid to follow the logic of his thinking. But the crisis was not yet spent. Before

ever it would be possible to shape a new long-term programme for which he called, quick decisions would have to be made on the direction which the new policy of the Labour Party would take. Graham replied to his letter on September 2nd, 1931.

"MY DEAR STAFFORD,

"Thank you very much for your letter of yesterday. I agree with practically everything you have written. There is at the moment a serious danger of irresponsible talk and action, but you must not worry. To-morrow afternoon seven or eight of us familiar with financial problems within recent years are meeting at Transport House. We propose to thrash out a constructive alternative for the immediate situation, please see the *Daily Herald* on Thursday, in which I am writing all that can be safely said at the moment.

"When Parliament meets we must make full use of our opportunities in Opposition to build up a constructive Socialist case, especially in the transition from trust and combine to a businesslike form of public corporation. Forgive this scrambled reply. . .

"Yours very sincerely,

• "WILLIAM GRAHAM "

On September 5th, two weeks after the fateful day upon which he received MacDonald's telegram, Parliament re-assembled to a scene unparalleled in its history.

There were at this time six hundred and fifteen members of Parliament. Every seat was taken and as there were not sufficient seats for all, the members crowded into the gangway. The galleries were full to capacity. And there, face to face, on the front benches, sat the betrayed and the betrayers. On the Government benches sat MacDonald, Snowden, Thomas, side by side with Baldwin, Chamberlain, Simon. Incredible! On the Opposition front bench Arthur Henderson sat in the place formerly occupied by MacDonald. To him, the defection of his old colleagues was a tragedy from which he would never recover. He had believed in these men, relied upon them as brothers sharing common ideals, serving a common cause, labouring for a common purpose. He sat waiting for the proceedings to begin, not as one ready to leap into the fray, but as an old man, sad at heart, steeling himself for an ordeal. Beside him sat his deputy leaders, J. R. Clynes and William Graham, both of whom shared the pangs of disappointment. On the same bench were Arthur Greenwood, Herbert Morrison and George Lansbury. To every one of them, the rupture in the ranks of the leadership of the Party had been a deep, personal blow. Beside them sat Sir Stafford

Cripps. While the defection of the leaders was a sad disappointment to him, there was no long personal association broken by the crisis. His thoughts turned upon the to-morrow, as, upright in his seat, he waited composedly for the battle to be joined.

Behind Labour's front bench the dense ranks of Labour men stared across the House with mixed feelings of anger and pathos. Behind the Government benches the greater throng of Tories and Liberals rejoiced in the turn of events. With mocking smiles and cynical expressions they waited to cheer MacDonald as he rose to explain the Government's policy and the reasons which had actuated him in his desertion of the Labour Party and the formation of the Coalition.

Although long past his prime as an orator he was a man of commanding presence and picturesque appearance. His naturally rich voice gave added power to his word. Now he was truculent and challenging and it appeared that he was throwing down the gauntlet of battle to the Party he had done so much to build. The sombreness of the Labour ranks disappeared from the moment he began to speak. Anger and indignation became vocal. But the fight was not yet on. Arthur Henderson, "Uncle Arthur" to the Labour Movement, immediately rose to reply and his supporters cheered him as he rose. He waited for the cheers to subside, obviously under considerable emotion, and strangely out of accord with the feelings of those behind him. Quietly yet with great dignity he began

"I hope the House will accept it from me that never on any previous occasion during the eight and twenty years that I have been a member of this House have I risen to address it with a greater feeling of embarrassment than I do today. No one who knows anything about the history of the Party with which I have been so long associated, and who knows anything of the day-to-day collaboration between the Prime Minister and myself, will expect me to have any feeling other than of a difficulty in finding myself called upon to reply to his speech."

MacDonald never once in his speech had referred to his past associations or showed the slightest discomfort concerning the change in his position. Henderson proceeded:

"He and I have occupied the most important offices—shall I say—of the Labour Movement in this country. It has only had two secretaries in thirty-one years. The Prime Minister was secretary for eleven years, and, at his request, I became his successor, a position which I have held just upon twenty years. We have been in two Governments. Now, I find

myself in a position which I never sought, called upon to reply to his first speech under exceptional conditions. May I say that the personal aspect of the case appeals to me very strongly? By the change that had taken place, we had lost three if not four of those who have been in the forefront of the battle, and who, especially in two cases, have been associated with the building up of the Movement. It is no use hon. members interrupting me—I shall deliver my speech in my own way. The loss must be felt especially by one situated as I am. I want to say this whether the withdrawal of our colleagues be long or short, whether it is temporary or permanent, it is a direct loss to the Labour Movement."

Whatever else MacDonald may have done he had delivered a deadly blow at a lifetime's friend, from which Henderson never fully recovered.

MacDonald received his vote of confidence by 309 votes to 250. Twelve of the majority consisted of former members of the Labour Party. Now the battle had really begun.



## CHAPTER 6

### LEFT TURN

IN the few weeks which had elapsed between the fall of the Labour Government and the reassembling of Parliament under the newly-formed "National" Government, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald encouraged the feeling of panic in the country, and posed as the saviour of the nation from the calamity of inflation which would follow if England went off the gold standard. That Stafford Cripps was not taken in by this campaign is clear from the following paragraphs of a letter written to his father on September 12th

"The position of this country is becoming more and more critical every day, and the best opinions we can get all tend to the view that whatever the Government in power, National, Tory, or Labour, it will be absolutely essential to devalue the £ within the next six months, unless strong and immediate international action is taken. There has been a strong swing to the Left in the Party and a general feeling of relief that we have shed a number of members who were on the extreme Right. Opinions differ very much as to what the effect would be of an Election in November, but most people seem to think that if the Election is delayed till next spring, Labour will have a strong chance of coming back into power. The difficulties as regards the financial position are so complicated and technical that I do not suppose that 1% even appreciate what they are. On the other hand, they will appreciate that the next Election is a direct fight between Socialism and Capitalism. The Tariffs issue will no doubt very much complicate the situation, and I am afraid that we as a Party shall have great difficulty in arriving at an agreed policy on this matter."

Hardly had it been possible for the credulous to return thanks for their salvation from the "disaster" of going off the gold standard than, one fine morning in September, England "slipped off gold" and a pound note could no longer look the sovereign in the face without shame and dishonour.

Nevertheless it did not stop Mr. Snowden from reintroducing the "National Economy Bill", with its wage cuts and reduction of unemployment pay, as the means to balance the Budget and keep England "on gold".

He was supported in the debate by Mr Neville Chamberlain, Minister of Health in the new Government, who would one day be Britain's Prime Minister

There had been several days of debate when Sir Stafford rose on September 29th, 1931, to move its rejection. The House was full when he began. Everybody expected him to make a speech of great merit but it is doubtful whether even those on the Labour side of the House anticipated a speech so forthright in its denunciation and so revolutionary in its implications

He began

"It is a curious reflection upon the mentality of the Government of this country that they are today pressing forward the final stage of a Bill which, barely three weeks ago, was introduced into this House as an emergency Measure to accomplish one purpose. That purpose was to save the Gold Standard. Intervening circumstances have completely defeated that object, yet the Government are, apparently, wholly unconscious of the failure of their one purpose, and the one object of their existence. Whatever justification there may have been for this Bill when it was first introduced, and up to ten days ago, that justification vanished at the hour in which this country went off the Gold Standard."

Having hammered that point home and accused the Government and its supporters of a class campaign to depress the standard of living of the workers while the going was good, he roused the anger of the Tories, in particular, and was often interrupted.

He turned his attention to MacDonald. Debating skill and clarity of thought and expression had never been specialities of the Prime Minister. He was a master of emotional words, the dramatic incident, the sonorous and the sentimental, the colourful claims and splendid peroration. For Sir Stafford, with his rich experience as a lawyer, MacDonald was an easy opponent who had in recent days made himself exceedingly vulnerable.

"Let me remind the House of the words which were used by the Prime Minister on the 8th of September," continued Sir Stafford. Looking directly at MacDonald he described how on that occasion the whole world was waiting with anxiety to hear his statement as to the financial position of the country and its power to stand up against any further drain of gold. Then he told how the Prime Minister used these words:

"One day it (the pound) would have been twenty shillings and the next day ten shillings, and it would have tumbled without control "

He assured the House, said Sir Stafford, that he was not scaremongering. Again he repeated the Prime Minister's words:

"I am not scaremongering, I am not scaremongering, I am giving you some history. That happened in Berlin. What then would have happened?"

Sir Stafford went on to quote the Prime Minister's answer to his own question:

"War pensions, old age pensions, health and insurance benefits would become worth, as they became in Germany, only the price of a newspaper. In Germany and Vienna people rushed to convert their whole life-savings into some tangible article, or offered everything they had for one square meal "

Cripps added: "The 'talkies' too, were called to his aid. The day before this House met—on September 7th—a picture of the Prime Minister was shown throughout the country holding an envelope with stamps amounting to eighty billion marks, and at the same time he explained the picture with these words:

"I hold in my hand an envelope of a letter posted in Berlin and sent to England at the time that the German credit was smashed. You will observe that the postage stamps upon it amount to the colossal sum of 80,000 million marks, a sum which was once equal to £4,000,000,000. That is the result of a smash in the credit of a country. Those of us who are now in power are not going to allow this country to sink into that deplorable position, and so I appeal to you all to do your bit "

"That," said Sir Stafford, "was a perfectly fantastic comparison which every financial authority in this country knew to be wholly unwarranted, but it was well and truly calculated to raise an atmosphere of panic in which legislation of this type might be passed without question or criticism, and, unfortunately, too well-calculated to inspire those in other countries, who had but a small knowledge of our financial position, with a complete lack of confidence "

Turning from MacDonald, he focused attention on Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Minister of Health. It had been widely publicised that when Britain secured £80,000,000 from abroad to stem the flow of gold from the country, the foreign creditors had insisted that the Government should carry through the

terms of the Economy Bill as a condition of receiving the credits.

So, turning towards the gentleman in question he proceeded

"On September 14th, the right hon gentleman, the Minister of Health, made this statement to the House 'It was the duty of the foreign bankers, when approached, to state under what conditions they thought it possible to raise the money' "

The right hon gentleman, the Minister of Health, did not look at all comfortable

Stafford went on

"If money is raised on conditions, as the House knows, the borrower is generally bound, morally at least, to carry out these conditions I do not think that anyone has yet told us what these conditions were, or whether we are morally bound by them, and I ask the right hon gentleman to tell us categorically what are the conditions that he mentioned in his speech of 14th September, and how far we are bound morally to see that those conditions are carried into effect "

He now gave way for Mr. Neville Chamberlain to reply Mr Chamberlain rose and said:

"The hon and learned Gentleman is confusing the issue It is perfectly obvious to what my observations referred on that occasion The conditions were not the conditions of a bargain; they were the conditions under which the bankers who had to raise the money thought it would be possible to do so in their markets "

This answer was not precise enough for Sir Stafford. So with the urbanity of the well-poised lawyer he pursued Chamberlain:

"I am only too happy to accept the right hon gentleman's answer if he means this, and this is what I as a lawyer do not quite appreciate: you ask a lender the conditions upon which you can get money from somebody else. He is to help you to raise the loan. He tells you that there must be certain conditions, and you say 'Go on and raise the loan' Does the right hon gentleman suggest that in those circumstances you are not bound to observe those conditions—not legally bound, but morally bound to observe them?"

Chamberlain tried again. He answered:

"The conditions were merely the conditions under which it would be possible to raise the money What the late Government had to be sure of

was that there would be sufficient confidence in foreign circles in the determination of the British Government to set their house in order and to balance their Budget "

Sir Stafford continued.

"I am afraid that it would be improper for me to continue the cross-examination of the right hon gentleman, so I must accept his answer as meaning that we are not bound morally or otherwise by any conditions whatsoever as regards this £80,000,000 credit. The right hon. gentleman acknowledges that statement by nodding his head. Therefore we can, both as regards this House and the country at large, remove that hedge behind which the Government has sought to take refuge "

He went on to tell the House that the major question they had to solve was not the balancing of the Budget, but the far more serious question of how to balance trade. The conclusion of the speech, however, was of most significance as a pointer to Cripps' own future policy and the Labour Party's turn to the left.

He wound up thus

"We on this side of the House have long predicted that capitalism as a system would fall. We now see that it has brought the whole structure of finance and industry to ruin, inflicting fresh miseries and sufferings on the workers throughout the world. We shall fight this Bill to the end.

"We believe that instead of trying to rush through a Bill of this sort the first vital matter to be attended to is the reorganisation and reconstruction of the financial machinery and industries of this country, so that the full benefit may be derived from them, not by those who own the capital, but by the nation as a whole, and to this end the financial and industrial machine must be brought under public control."

This speech did not bring congratulations "from all parts of the House". It did, however, rouse enthusiasm in the depleted ranks of Labour.

But the Labour Party was not to enjoy a respite until the following spring when its chances might be better. The National Government dissolved Parliament on October 7th, while the Thirty-first Annual Conference of the Labour Party was being held in Scarborough. The election date was set for October 20th. The announcement of the dissolution of Parliament came through on the same day that Stafford Cripps was making his first Party Conference speech.

The 1931 conference of the British Labour Party in Scarborough "sat throughout in an atmosphere of challenge," said Arthur Henderson:

"All parties to the decision of dissolution," according to Henderson, "had realised the overwhelming importance of inflicting upon the Socialist Party a crushing defeat. All the world over (capitalism) has broken down. You have said with emphasis that you refuse any longer to tinker with its patent inadequacies. On the other hand is Socialism, which is now definitely recognised as the only alternative to the present chaos."

Everybody talked Socialism at the 1931 conference. J. R. Clynes, the little, able, elderly, staunch gradualist, declared

"We are no longer frightened by the term Socialism. We must affirm it more than ever in this coming election as an alternative to the crushing burdens of the vicious and foolish system of capitalism which has produced poverty in the midst of plenty, and in the face of these facts I ask you unanimously to confirm your Socialist faith."

A resolution by F. W. Pethick-Lawrence, the experienced financial expert of the Party, said much the same thing and demanded the nationalisation of the banks and credit system.

It was in this atmosphere of non-reconciliation with decaying capitalism that Sir Stafford Cripps made his maiden Labour Party speech. Speaking on the subject of "Unemployment Cuts", a ringing debut for the rich lawyer, Cripps remarked that "the one thing that is *not inevitable* now is *gradualness*." Supporting unemployment relief, attacking relief cuts and the introduction of the Means Test, Cripps said:

"The unemployed problem in this country is one of the main symptoms of the breakdown of capitalist organisation. It is their duty, as it is the duty of any system of industrial organisation, to supply work, and if work cannot in any special circumstances be supplied, then maintenance must be given in its stead.

"These measures and maintenance, necessary as they are in a period of transition, are mere hospital work, and we are not here to do hospital work for the Juggernaut of Capitalism. We are here to stop that Juggernaut from his progress through the world.

"The recent crisis . . . I think, brought home to all of us that the time has come when we can no longer try with one hand to patch up the old building of Capitalism and with the other to build Socialism."

Thus, the defection on the part of hitherto "beloved leaders" pushed the surviving Labour leadership into a wave of "un-compromising Socialism" such as the Labour Party has seldom enjoyed before or since. In the demure words of Mr Attlee, some years later

"the revulsion from MacDonaldism caused the party to lean rather too far toward a catastrophic view of progress, and to emphasise unduly the conditions of crisis which were being experienced . . ."

But Stafford Cripps was in the forefront of this "swing to the left"

He created a profound stir throughout the country by his election speech at Hull, when he bluntly stated that Labour had a "complete scheme to take over the Bank of England, to be followed by the control of the joint stock banks, the discount houses and the complete financial apparatus of the City. He announced that all foreign securities would have to be mobilised with a view to ensuring the stability of the currency. There would be established a national Investment Board, a re-organisation of the basic industries, power, transport, iron and steel as public services, and the nationalisation of the land

As the General Election drew near, Stafford's relatives were watching the scene and his part in it with the greatest interest Beatrice Webb wrote to Parmoor on October 20th, 1931.

"On the whole I rejoice in the crisis as I think it will clear the issue and purify the party. Sidney and I were so glad at Stafford's attitude towards things and to see the ease with which he gets on with the other leaders and with the rank and file of the Labour Party. . . .

"I wonder what is your forecast of the results of the election. Sidney and I estimate a loss of 100 seats owing to the withdrawal of Liberals in three-cornered constituencies. However, as I want the Labour Party to have more time for thought about the future I am not keen on it taking office for another five years . . .

"Always affectionately yours

"BEATRICE WEBB."

But the spokesmen of the "Nationals" (Tory, Liberal, "Labour" Coalition) were in high glee. From the end of the war in 1918 they had succeeded, in every election, in raising a panic issue. In 1918 Mr. Lloyd George had led the Coalition of Tories and Liberals against Labour to the cry of "Down with Bolshevism." In 1924 Baldwin panicked the country with the

forged "Red Letter" Now they panicked the country with a caricature of Labour's programme as "Bolshevism Run Mad" and put out the story that "Mr Henderson's hooligans" planned to "seize the deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank". All means of publicity were turned to account. The *Daily Mirror* even published a picture of Petrograd during the "June days" of 1917 with Kerensky's machine-guns posted at the street corners against the anticipated Bolshevik rising.

It is doubtful if ever in the history of British General Elections have the reactionaries conducted a more despicable manoeuvre. Sir Stafford, now notorious for his revolutionary speeches, received the full impact of their campaign. Mr Herbert Rogers, Sir Stafford's election agent in Bristol East, writes that

"During the General Election of 1931, a vile campaign was conducted against Sir Stafford Cripps, and his opponents adopted the most unscrupulous methods. The following is an instance. There is one area (which usually polls 75 per cent to 80 per cent Labour) in which a large factory is situated, employing in normal times upward of 1,000 hands, and in recent years this had been converted to the manufacture of artificial silk. With the slump in the artificial silk industry, the whole district had been reduced to poverty, aggravated by the fact that many of the workers had invested their small savings in the industry. Three days before Polling Day, huge posters appeared on the hoardings—'Return National Government and Silk Mills will be reopened.' This was followed on the eve of the Poll and during Polling Day itself with the lighting of certain fires, smoke being visible through the tall chimney stacks. One can appreciate the effect this might have had upon the voters in such a district where poverty had been widespread since the closing down of the factory. However, in spite of a terrific barrage he did increase his poll over that of the By-election by 200 votes, and won with a majority of 429."

At the dissolution Labour held 264 seats, the Conservatives 263, Liberals 58. After the election 471 Conservatives returned to Parliament; Labour with 46 seats had dropped 218.

Parmoor was astounded by the election results. "What a crushing blow," he wrote Stafford as the announcements were made:

"There it is, and the only moral is to look forward to a resurrection. I never thought that our late Prime Minister could give such a blow to his own party, but he and Snowden have done their best to crush us and have so far succeeded. Thank goodness you are saved out of the wreck, but this will mean a great deal of anxiety for you."



Evidence of the never ceasing courage, hope and youthfulness of Parmoor is found in this same letter

"God bless you and yours, my dear boy, and let us start again together"

Nevertheless this would be the time when Stafford's father would retire from the active political struggle. He received a letter from Sidney Webb at this time It said.

"DEAR ALFRED,

"What a cataclysm! We must now 'pick up the pieces' The satisfactory feature is the aggregate vote To have maintained a solid seven million voters, nearly a third of all the voters, and only a loss of twelve per cent from the former maximum, in face of such a terrific adverse combination of forces, is really remarkable

"I went to meet Henderson on arrival at Euston, and was present in the afternoon at a little committee of his official staff, to make the necessary urgent arrangements

"He was pulled down by his cold, and of course physically shaken, but very brave and stalwart . . . When the House of Lords came up, he said that everything there must wait until he knew *your* wishes . . . I hope you will be able presently to help our sadly diminished group, which Ponsonby and Marley will manage (I cannot promise any but occasional attendance and speech). But the question is as to immediate leadership Ponsonby would, I am sure, act as Deputy if you like, with eventual succession You may, however, think that the beginning of a new Parliament is the right moment for a change

"With our love to both of you

"SIDNEY."

Parmoor deemed it the right moment to retire from the leadership of the Labour Group in the House of Lords and Ponsonby succeeded him.

Replying on October 31st, 1931, to a double-edged note of congratulation from his former house-master at Winchester, J. B. Furley, a Conservative, Cripps wrote:

"It is very kind of you to write me so understanding a letter, and I agree with you that from a purely personal point of view it would have been more comfortable to have been out of the House at present. I naturally take a rather different view as regards the present situation to that which you express in your letter, but these differences I feel can have no effect upon a friendship between people who are both anxious to do their best for the country . . .

"Our fundamental difference of outlook is, I think, that you envisage a possibility of the permanent continuance of our present social order, while I do not. Once you have educated the population with the franchise, I believe it is inevitable that the overwhelming majority of the people which consists of the working classes will insist upon controlling the affairs of this country in their own interests, and my desire is to assist them to do this in the wisest possible way."

Back to the House of Commons came Sir Stafford. But what a scene was there! Only fifty-two Members of Parliament were from the ranks of the Labour Movement! At the dissolution of Parliament there had been 264! Six of the fifty-two who were from the Independent Labour Party, split away from the Labour Party, and the new session of Parliament began with only forty-six Labour Party members to wage its fight. Gone too were all but three of the leaders who had graced the front Opposition bench. Only Mr George Lansbury, Mr Clement Attlee and Sir Stafford Cripps were left of the earlier front-bench leaders who had now gone into opposition. The Tories had a free hand to pursue their own policy. Mr. MacDonald and his erstwhile colleagues in Labour leadership might occupy front seats on the Government benches, but it was obvious that Mr. Baldwin would call the tune.

That the crisis had caught the Labour Government and the Labour Movement unawares is universally admitted. That the fall of the Labour Government had given the whole Labour Movement a jolt to the left is unquestioned. But this did not mean that the older Tory Party, the Liberal Parties, and the supporters of the "National" Government had foreseen the crisis, understood it and knew how to surmount it.

The striking thing about all the debates concerning the crisis in Britain at this time is that everyone either fought shy of the most significant features of the situation or became lost in generalities about the crisis of capitalism. Nobody had drawn attention to the fact that when Britain was forced off the gold standard in the war of 1914-18 it signified the beginning of the eclipse of the British Empire by the U.S.A., the emergence of the "dollar" standard, the rise to world power of American economy, and the consequent regrouping of the powers in the general struggle for a place in the world.

The leaders of Britain were frightened by the Russian Revolution but oblivious to the significance of the development of the U.S.A. during the war. "Back to normalcy" was their out-

look, which meant back to 1914. It never dawned on them that Britain's pre-eminence was gone for ever and the real challenger to her pre-eminence had overtaken her even while she was busy settling accounts with Germany. Nor had it dawned on them that the gold standard rose and fell with the peculiar conditions which accompanied the transformation of Britain into the "workshop of the world". It became a workshop with an agrarian hinterland only developed enough to feed half her people. That enabled her to take payment for her exports in the import of goods. So long as this obtained under her domination of the world market, gold could function as a standard and as a means of payment of relatively small balances of trade. But once there appeared on the historical horizon a greater power than she, who could export to her and to others on a scale unprecedented, and this power could *not sufficiently take payment in goods* but only in dollars or their equivalent in gold, the days of the gold standard were numbered and also the pre-eminence of the British Empire.

The crash of 1931 shook Britain from end to end. The Conservative leaders had dropped all their efforts to restore the gold standard, slipped into the fluid realms of "managed currency" and desperately sought to pull the Empire together. But this was no British Renaissance. Old men were in the saddle. MacDonald was old and grey. Snowden was old and soured. Baldwin was looking forward to his retirement, when he could leisurely browse among his books and stroll around his country grounds. Chamberlain sat on the Government front bench with the vision of a Birmingham cashier and the demcanour of a permanent depression. They were not merely physically old. They were spiritually old. It was they who began the process of adaptation to the twilight of the British Empire, snarling at the social revolution and retreating before the rivals of their Empire in the name of "Peace" and "Safety First". They had seen the rise of Mussolini in Italy and were rather pleased with the way he had handled the "labour problem". They were not unhappy at all about the advance of Hitler in Germany. They never dreamed that these new powers emerging from the ruins of war would leap at the British Empire and threaten its very existence. They still thought of Japan as an old friendly ally who could always be relied upon as a friend in the Far East against the encroaching power of the U.S.A. and the Russian Revolution, while they regarded the shifting of the headquarters of finance from London to New York as only a temporary dislocation.

which would be set right when things became "normal" again

Such was the position when Sir Stafford Cripps and his forty-five colleagues assembled for the opening of the new Parliament in November, 1931. The forty-six had to elect the leader of the Labour Party. Here was an extraordinary situation which, had Sir Stafford been a man of careerist ambitions, he could quickly have turned to account and rapidly stepped into the shoes of Arthur Henderson as its leader. Although his experience as a political leader had been very short, in most of the qualities of leadership in Parliament Cripps was well ahead of any of the forty-six.

The two others with front bench experience were Mr. George Lansbury and Mr. Clement Attlee. Lansbury possessed the qualifications which Sir Stafford lacked. He had behind him a long experience of the Labour Party. He was known throughout the length and breadth of the land. He was elderly but still a man of great vigour and youthful spirit. He had the "human touch", free from any patronage. His ruddy complexion, surrounded by his white hair and chopped beard, and his affectionate bearing toward his fellow men were familiar to every group of Labour people. It would be no exaggeration to describe him at this time as the best-loved leader of the British Labour Movement. His election to the leadership of the Party of forty-six Labour M P s was therefore natural and almost automatic.

Next came the election of Mr. Clement Attlee as Deputy-Leader. Again Attlee was an older man than Stafford with more than a quarter of a century of Party experience behind him. He had been a member of both the first and second Labour Governments and had had years of experience on the Opposition front bench. There was another factor in the situation which favoured him too. Attlee could give all his time to the job. Stafford was still practising at the Bar and his services as a leading lawyer of the day were in great demand. However this may be, the fact is that he did not strive to supersede either Attlee or Lansbury, whose parliamentary fellowship meant so much to him. Indeed, within two years, Attlee superseded Lansbury and personal conditions arose which caused Attlee to contemplate resigning in favour of Sir Stafford. Instead of taking advantage of these circumstances, it was Sir Stafford who organised the solution of the difficulties and persuaded Attlee to continue.

Hence there was no "struggle for leadership" in these first days of the new Opposition front bench. On the contrary there began a warm friendship between the three men upon whom fell

the brunt of leadership in Labour's opposition to the "National" Government. They had much in common. None of them was an advocate of the revolutionary seizure of power. The revolution they sought was the Christian revolution of heart and mind of the individual, which would bring the economic and social revolution through the peaceful ways of constitutional change by consent of the contending class forces. Never were three men more fundamentally in accord and their friendship became deep and enduring.

There were differences between them however in temperament and personal history. The two elder men were "seasoned" party members with an abundance of patience derived from long years of persistent "struggle against the stream". Stafford was young in party history, highly intellectual and impatient to secure results. He had examined the crisis conditions which had brought about the fall of the Labour Government as if it were a lawyer's brief, come to sharp conclusions and was ready with his plan for quick fundamental changes in the structure of society. These significant differences must not be forgotten.

But the effect of the heavy defeat of the Labour Party in the General Election was two-fold. The more conservatively-minded of the Party, and the Trade Unions, now blamed the leftward turn of the Party for the defeat. "The Party had gone too far to the Left and frightened the people," they declared. Sir Stafford and others were still of the opinion that there could be no return to "gradualism", and, as the small contingent of Labour M.P.s lined up behind George Lansbury for the "battle to begin" in the House of Commons, there began a struggle in the larger Labour Movement outside Parliament, in which Sir Stafford sought to capture the mind of the Labour Party and secure it for a revolutionary socialist economic policy. But it is a dangerous thing when a "gentleman" embarks on revolution, however "constitutional" it may be in its conception, if he is armed only with high ideals and great principles.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE GATHERING STORM

WHEN Sir Stafford Cripps and his colleagues took their places on the Opposition benches in the House of Commons and faced the triumphant "National" Government in November, 1931, the Government gave not the slightest indication of their programme. Perhaps there was an appropriateness in this. For during these very autumn days of 1931, in which the "economic blizzard" from the United States reached increasing ferocity, bombs fell upon a railway line just north of Mukden in far-off Manchuria. The Japanese invasion of China had begun. Thus less than thirteen years after the end of the First World War, the first bombs of the Second World War had fallen. These days marked the beginning of the uneasy peace and of the re-alignment of forces for the grand clash of arms which would engulf the entire world between 1939 and 1945.

At the end of the war of 1914-18 the victorious powers, Britain, France and the U.S.A., had set up a new regime. Its pillars were the Versailles Treaty in Europe, the Nine Power Pact in the Far East, the League of Nations to regulate international relations within the framework of these treaties, the Kellogg Pact to outlaw war, and a Disarmament Conference to bring about world disarmament. Outside the framework of this system stood Soviet Russia, the organised embodiment of Social Revolution unleashed by the war and against which the "Peace system" was also organised. Although the League of Nations was run primarily by Britain and France, the U.S.A. co-operated with it. Then simultaneously with the economic crash in the West, Japan tore up the Nine Power Treaty and the Kellogg Pact, a foreshadowing of what Germany and Italy would do with the Versailles Treaty as the League of Nations went into a state of dissolution. But no one in that House of Commons on the day when the National Government began the work of the new Parliament thought of this background to the speeches.

It fell to Sir Stafford to challenge that King's Speech with an

Opposition amendment. On behalf of the Labour Party he moved that at the end of the address be added the words

"But regret that Your Majesty's advisers have no policy for the planning and co-ordination under public ownership or control of the principal industries, including agriculture and the banking and financial machinery of the country . . . and all the factors which are at present constituting economic barriers against the free flow of international trade . . . and further regrets that there is no mention in Your Majesty's Gracious Speech of any intention of reversing the unjust economies imposed upon the unemployed and other classes of persons, or of restoring and developing the social services "

It was a remarkable scene when Sir Stafford stood before the serried ranks of the Government and its supporters. The Distinguished Strangers' Gallery and the public gallery were full to overflowing, but the strangest feature was the packing of the floor of the House. Government supporters filled both the Government side and the Opposition side of the House, except for the small corner behind the front Opposition bench, in which were squeezed the half hundred Labour Opposition supporters. Sir Stafford faced the packed and hostile House.

He told the House that the Government had "no policy whatever to put forward" and proceeded to show the kind of Programme he thought was necessary. Covering much ground he urged

"the summoning of an international conference to deal with international economic difficulties . . . war debts, reparations, their relationship to subsequent commercial debts and municipal loans . . . to deal with disarmament, currency and exchange problems . . . to make a real big effort to break down the economic barriers against the free flow of international trade . . ."

To relieve the economic distress in Britain he called for "a definite plan for the co-ordination of industry, agriculture and finance, so that the national resources may be pooled and used in the best interests of the nation as a whole."

He wound up his much-interrupted speech with a plea that the Government relieve distress among the unemployed, whose unemployment pay had been reduced. Neither this appeal, nor another which he made before the Christmas recess, had any effect other than to call from the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the accusation that he was being swayed by "the genial humour of human sympathy".

But there was not much "genial humour" in the way Sir Stafford handled Mr Ramsay MacDonald in these days. The Prime Minister, speaking in Luton, had there denied his responsibility for reducing the allowances for the unemployed. Stafford dealt with MacDonald as a prosecuting counsel deals with a prisoner in the dock.

Standing erect, facing the Government front bench, his arm outstretched and his accusing finger pointing at MacDonald, he said:

"I should like to give the Prime Minister an opportunity of answering a question."

He stopped for a moment as the attention of the whole House became riveted on the scene. Then he went on:

"He said at Luton that the Government were being accused of responsibility for reducing the allowances of the unemployed and that was not true. Would the Prime Minister kindly say who was responsible?"

Seeing no signs of response in MacDonald, he continued:

"I am prepared to give way if he will answer the question."

Still there was no answer. MacDonald sat looking down frowningly at the Treasury table before him and made no answer.

"The right hon gentleman is apparently incapable of stating whether his own statement is true or not,"

Sir Stafford taunted. Still no answer.

Pointing again at MacDonald, he said:

"When I speak at Luton on Thursday, I shall tell the people he was unable to answer the question in the House of Commons. Will the right hon gentleman wish to say something?"

He paused again, still poised erect, pointing his finger at the gloomy figure before him.

"Apparently, no," concluded Sir Stafford. "He is trying to shelter himself against some vague suggestion of responsibility in some other quarter. Surely a rather despicable piece of conduct."

But nothing would draw the frowning MacDonald and Sir Stafford turned from him with contempt.

At the end of the session in December, 1931, Stafford wrote to his father:



"The Session ended quite satisfactorily I think, but the atmosphere of the House forebodes a full Tory administration very shortly, unless the Liberals give up every principle they have. The atmosphere in the country, so far as our Party is concerned, is I think improving, and people are beginning to realise that the National Government is not an unmixed blessing when it means reaction."

When Parliament reassembled in February, 1932, Mr Neville Chamberlain, now the Chancellor of the Exchequer, went into action. The struggle of Britain to find her new place in the stormy scene of world affairs was his responsibility. True, the bombs of the Second World War were falling, but they were, as yet, in far-away Manchuria. Besides it was not the Japanese who had dethroned Britain in economic and financial affairs. The U.S.A. was the culprit in this matter. What to do? First, having rushed through the abnormal Importations Bill which imposed duties up to a hundred per cent on commodities which were supposed to be dumped, Chamberlain now announced a general duty of ten per cent on all imports, except, be it noted, on wheat and meat. At the same time, he announced the setting up of an Import Duties Advisory Committee, which would have the power to remove articles from the free list to the tariff list without reference to Parliament for approval. The next step was to move towards Empire Free Trade, and the famous Ottawa Conference which established a system of Imperial preferences and quota schemes for wheat and meat significantly left off the Free List of the Import Duties scheme.

This was economic nationalism in full swing, whereby the "National" Government, with the aid of the depreciated pound, hoped to win back the markets lost since the beginning of the great slump. Chamberlain took up Sir Stafford's suggestion about a "world economic conference" but held it over until after the Ottawa Conference. Whatever chance there may have been of a World Economic Conference achieving success in dealing with current problems before the Ottawa Conference, there was none afterwards. Nevertheless, the British Government laid down for the Preparatory Commission of the Conference four conditions for stabilisation, namely:

- (a) A final and satisfactory settlement of the debt question;
- (b) The restoration of satisfactory trade balances by the lowering of tariff barriers;

- (c) A rise in the level of wholesale prices,
- (d) Guarantees against a repetition of the circumstances that forced Britain off the gold standard

When Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer and official spokesman for British big business, addressed the World Economic Conference he referred to the "economic warfare which has arisen between us and other countries" and added:

"We must maintain that warfare, so long as it is the other countries who have taken the aggressive and are unwilling to make any sort of reparation or restitution for the wrongs they have done us"

Such injured innocence, in this sophisticated age, can only be admired, but it was surely a little ungenerous of Mr. Chamberlain to identify virtue so completely with his own cause. Sir Stafford suggested that the National Government pursue a policy such as President Roosevelt was then advocating in America.

"to inject purchasing power in the system by means of forced expenditure of some sort or another, and it is by means of pumping in the consuming power to start with in order to meet production that a revival of the price level will be brought about"

The suggestion made no headway. The World Economic Conference was a flop. Instead of the stabilisation of currencies, the lowering of tariff barriers and the like, the conference was followed by a currency war, more tariffs and intensified competition.

Meanwhile there came a sequel to the dropping of the bombs on Mukden. The Chinese appealed to the League of Nations and the signatories of the Nine Power Pact to stop the Japanese invasion. Not only the Chinese, but all the world, looked to the League to stand by them and block the path of the aggressor. The principal powers involved were of course Britain and America. In this case America was prepared to honour the Nine Power Treaty, for thereby she could put a spoke in the wheel of Japan. The British "National" Government was not prepared to join with America in that purpose or to stand by her pledges to the Covenant of the League in the matter.

The Conservatives of Britain had never forgiven America for forcing upon them the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese

Treaty at the Washington Conference of 1922 That Treaty had been signed in 1905 with a twofold purpose It was designed to stem the advance of Russia and America into China Without an ally in the East, an ally in fact if not in law, then Britain's pre-eminence in the Far East was gone for ever Japan was her hope against the two-way encroachments When China pursued her appeals to the League, Simon, Britain's Foreign Secretary, was applauded by the Japanese Minister, who testified that Sir John had made out a better case in justification of Japan's invasion of China than he could himself have done When Mr Stimson made the declaration on behalf of the American Government that the U S A would not recognise any Japanese gains from aggression, and declared again for the validity of the Nine Power Treaty which no single power could declare invalid, Britain refused to join with America in this policy When Lord Lytton, on behalf of the League of Nations, headed a mission of investigation into Japan's actions against China, the Government made it clear that it would take no action to implement the Covenant of the League against Japan

The Labour Party had, since five months after the beginning of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, demanded action by the League of Nations supporting China against Japan, and Stafford Cripps had pursued that course The outcome, however, of the League's failure and especially Britain's part in it had disturbed him considerably In fact the cynical duplicity of the British Government's spokesman with regard to League obligations marked a decisive turning point in his attitude to international affairs. When the report of the Lytton Committee in Manchuria was accepted by the Assembly of the League of Nations, and the matter was discussed in the House of Commons in 1933, he said:

"It is important to notice that the findings of the League of Nations are based upon a series of breaches of faith by the Japanese. Since this is true, the question now arises, what are we to do as a sequel to Japan's action upon the League of Nations report?"

He continued:

"A very serious question has been raised by several of the speeches made this evening, and indeed by the statement of the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, that we will not become involved in this war at any event Nobody wants to become involved in this war. . . But does that statement mean—the Committee must face up to it—the abrogation of Article XVI of the Covenant? . . . Are we merely going to put ourselves

into the position of performing what we would call the centuries-old ceremony of kow-towing to the bullies of the world, or are we going to say that the theory of sanctions is a real theory, and it, indeed, is a theory and a practice that was invented for the purpose of assisting in keeping peace, and are we going to apply it? Probably the Foreign Secretary will not answer that question tonight, but sooner or later this House will have to come to a determination as to whether they are to treat Article XVI as a mere scrap of paper "

What a pity that he left the Foreign Secretary free to dodge the question! Stafford did not yet see the full significance of Japan's invasion of Manchuria in relation to the world situation as a whole, although he regarded Sir John Simon's actions and speeches as morally indefensible. He saw the implication of the Government's attitude to sanctions against Japan. That was clear enough from his questioning of Simon, but in leaving Simon free to reply at a more convenient season, instead of forcing him to be explicit, he left the Government with the benefit of the doubt and the interpretation of its policy towards the League and its Covenant to be determined by implication and future events.

But Sir Stafford could not himself dismiss the League and its Covenant so cynically. He had idealised the League of Nations and its Covenant since first it was launched in 1919. It had become part of his religious equipment. The League had been to him the means for Christian practice in international affairs as the Labour Party was in home affairs. Shocked by the duplicity of the Foreign Secretary, Simon, and the failure of the League of Nations, he felt himself driven to the conclusion that to hope for sanctions or any collective action to stop war or to secure disarmament was futile so long as a capitalist Government controlled British affairs. This was a negative decision but a very important one for Stafford in this period when the Labour Party was still engaged in re-shaping its "alternative to gradualism".

In April, 1931, G. D. H. Cole and the Countess of Warwick invited Stafford and a few other leaders of the Labour Party, including Mr. Clement Attlee, Mr. Hugh Dalton, Mr. E. Shinwell, Mr. George Lansbury, and Mr. William Mellor, to an informal gathering at Easton Lodge, the home of the Countess. All of these had been outspoken against the old "gradualist" policy of the Party. Cole had issued a questionnaire to those invited to this small assembly of leaders. The questionnaire determined the lines of discussion, which sought opinion on "the causes of defeat" at the General Election; the need for a re-

statement of policy and what such a re-statement should contain, the possibility of another financial crisis should the Labour Party be returned to power; the future of the House of Lords; party propaganda; and the relation of the Party to the Trade Unions and the Co-operative Movement

There was no discussion of the nature of the world crisis or any fundamental review of Britain's place in world affairs. They asked, "Would there be another financial crisis if Labour came to power?" They were all of the opinion that there would be. How should they prepare to handle it? The House of Lords stood in the way. Hence there was no need for a Second Chamber and especially an hereditary Second Chamber. Therefore one of the first things the next Labour Government must do was to clear the House of Lords out of the way and, by means of emergency powers, *quickly* nationalise the banks and take control of the financial apparatus. Then, swiftly put into operation a programme of nationalisation of coal, electricity, gas, transport, banks and key industries and the land. They had a further meeting and were generally agreed upon the course they would pursue to persuade the Party Conference to adopt *their* "alternative to gradualism".

Before the 1932 National Conference of the Party was held, the Independent Labour Party, one of the pioneer organisations of the Labour Party, split and those following James Maxton left the Labour Party. Those of the I L P who remained in the Labour Party reinforced those who had met at Easton Lodge and, with a few exceptions, joined with them in forming the Socialist League. This brought together a number of able people, the most "Left" of the Labour Party's intelligentsia. The first chairman was Mr. E. F. Wise, an economist and business adviser. With him on the Executive Committee were Sir Stafford Cripps, Sir Charles Trevelyan, Minister of Education in the first Labour Government, an elderly but *live* force in the Independent Labour Party, Professor Harold Laski of the London School of Economics, William Mellor, ex-editor of the *Daily Herald*, H. N. Brailsford, a brilliant journalist and ex-editor of *The New Leader*, Professor G. D. H. Cole, G. R. Mitchison, a barrister, Professor R. H. Tawney, C. R. Attlee, Deputy-Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Harold Clay, a leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Aneurin Bevan, J. F. Horrabin, cartologist and educationalist, Ellen Wilkinson, H. L. Elvin, D. N. Pritt, K.C.

Here was a galaxy of intellectual talent comprised of Christian

Socialists, Pacifists, variants of Marxists, ex-Communists, ex-I L P'ers All were ready to join in the "Leftward" drive and at their first National Conference, held at Leicester in the same week as the National Conference of the Labour Party, they drew up a programme which had its origin in the discussions at Easton Lodge. The programme was in reality an expansion of the programme Sir Stafford had been formulating and advocating since immediately after the fall of the Labour Government in 1931.

Sir Stafford was later to be accused of organising and financing the Socialist League as his means of winning the leadership of the Labour Party That he was the main source of financial aid is true, but that the Socialist League had anything to do with his fight for leadership was untrue He was fighting for ideas, not leadership The fact is that his activities with the Socialist League proved ultimately to be the cause of his being sacked from leadership in the Labour Party.

Beatrice Webb, Sir Stafford's aunt, once wrote to Stafford at the end of 1931 expressing her solicitude for him in his position on the depleted front Opposition bench • She wrote •

"I am afraid you must be feeling rather lonely on that Opposition bench, though Lansbury seems to be doing well in his own way and creating a certain impression of directness and honesty as well as good humour I am also afraid that you will find it rather difficult to combine a busy professional career with leadership in the House of Commons and that even solicitors may be frightened off by some aspects of your public work However, that is the penalty of taking up the cause of the bottom dog—the upper dog will not love you!"

She had really no need to be afraid on either account. His professional business was flourishing more than ever, while on the front Opposition bench there was a close friendship between the three leaders and especially between Stafford and George Lansbury In this period they not only worked together in the House of Commons, they were frequent visitors to each other's homes and they discussed together their personal problems in relation to their politics. A letter from George Lansbury to Stafford, written on July 17th, 1932, after a visit to "Good-fellows" where they unburdened themselves to each other, reveals how greatly shaken George had been by the collapse of 1931 and the subsequent confusion in Labour's ranks. He wrote.

"I have wanted to talk or write to you ever since we had the talk

during which I said I felt like joining the Communists and you replied if I went wrong you would lose faith in everybody

"The fact is, life becomes more and more difficult for me, everything gets so mixed, poisons, causes tumble into each other and form such a hotch-potch of ideas that truth or what seems like truth gets quite smothered. Sometimes my daily tasks come and go quite easily, at other times my whole being gets overwrought. At other times I am not certain of my own action because sometimes you others see the right course different from myself. One day the party seems all-important, the next day quite unimportant because its interests seem to conflict with truth. Then I find myself smothering my own mind and thoughts because others think a certain way better than mine, but over-riding everything is the simple fact that full of guile of sorts as I am, my wickedness is not of the kind that can stand up to the guile of men like Simon or J. R. M. I hear words from them which mean certain things to the ordinary men and something else to the men who use them. Consequently I am often on the wrong tack. But my chief thought is the multitudes outside who *trust* us, those thousands who pin their faith to our assurance that given power, big things will be attempted. I think of myself, even if I live to see us in power, will it be possible for me to keep my faith. *The thought of leadership does not enter, it is as one of the 350 in the House* and then when the others come under review, what a mixture of personal ambitions and ignorance confronts us and this appals me.

"Somehow, in ways it is impossible to describe, I get bewildered by the fact that though we cannot live without bread, it is equally if not more true we *cannot* live with it alone. I have striven hard to make myself and others see that we must each lose our lives in the life of the Community and while fighting for bread and rights for ourselves, we must never forget the common weal, but the last has been buried in words and as a result our movement is full of men and women who measure success by what it brings to them. This is not a fault of mine, it is perhaps the only decent thing that has remained firm and fixed since my earlier enthusiasm. . . . I believe the world, and our people especially, need a purely religious message, not theological, in fact the world needs this more than anything else. Yet there come days when my want of faith both in our actions and our courage and discretion worries me to distraction. I laugh and keep as stout a heart to the hills of difficulty as is possible, but often my heart fails and my soul seems to cry out within me whether I am spending my old age in the way that is best. At the start I felt God had given me a task to do. It may be so, but my doubt is whether I am good enough to do it or whether the way is right. You must not imagine there is self-righteousness in what I say now, but it is true my mind does not allow me to see more than a very few who see the im-

personal side of life as I know I do, yet if we cannot within the framework of our party get together a body of men and women especially young ones who will see the cause of Socialism as a religion to be served as St Francis and Tolstoi served their faiths, all our work is hopeless

"It is me and my own faults and shortcomings and misgivings which perplex and baffle me and make me so tiresome in thought and action. Don't answer"

What reply if any, Stafford ever gave to the letter in subsequent conversations, I do not know. But the significant recalling of "if I went astray you would lose faith in everybody" is a touching evidence of the regard and admiration Stafford had for Lansbury.

To find George Lansbury, who talked the same language of Christianity as he and held the same fundamental beliefs, having such doubts and fears that he felt "like joining the Communists" was a shock to his newly-formed convictions. For such a decision would have struck at the very foundations of his beliefs. However, Lansbury did not "join the Communists" and together they travelled the revised Fabian way, which was emerging from the leadership of the Labour Party.

Shortly afterwards, Lansbury had a talk with "Uncle Arthur" Henderson, the Secretary of the Labour Party, who after the General Election had become very worried about their "Left" agitation. Now he was afraid lest the Labour Party move too fast for the economically-minded trade unionists. George Lansbury wrote to Stafford of this conversation

"I saw Uncle Arthur yesterday. I do not think he is very well though he says he is. I found him a bit upset with the sort of forward policy we aim at, he talked of mines and others demanding something to go on with and not being content to wait for Socialism. This seems like our old friend Gradualism with a vengeance. I reminded him that at Scarborough all our speakers deliberately and after due consideration declared we could not deliver the goods re Social service etc, within the capitalist system. He is not anxious for us to be too definite about big Socialist measures, as our first objectives. Put them in our programme, but be sure when we come to power to keep our line of least resistance. He is not dishonest or to be blamed for this attitude. Like me he has spent his whole life doing small things while advocating big 'changes'. You must make him see the movement he has done so much to foster will perish if once again it gets lost in the morass of gradualism.

"I send you this note because he told me he is seeing you this weekend . . ."



In December, 1932, George Lansbury and two others went on a deputation to Ramsay MacDonald. This called forth from Lansbury sad observations on his old colleague of earlier days. He wrote to Cripps

" I must tell you about J R M when we meet. He is a terrible mixture of sanity, cowardice, and utter lack of principle. He is like a rudderless vessel, just drifts, does not attempt to see an argument.

"But I came away terribly distressed that a man with his mentality should have led us all for so many years. He never could have believed in civil liberty or socialism. His whole mind is one web of tortuous conservatism. He has no solid root of belief anywhere except perhaps a lingering kind of protestant faith as expounded by John Knox. The sort of individual liberty best expressed in the words, 'what I believe is of God, what you believe in a contrary sense is of the Devil and as such must not be heard in the land.' "

In the light of this evidence of the close accord and association of Stafford Cripps and his colleagues in the leadership of the Party, the real reasons for his efforts with the Socialist League must be sought elsewhere than in a struggle for leadership. They lie more in the character and mind of the man than in his personal ambition. He was following the urge derived from his Christian idealism. He was conscious of the conservatism and the economism of the Trade Unions and their leaders, their insistence on squeezing economic concessions rather than making fundamental Socialist changes, their lack of idealism and their great power in determining the policy of the Labour Party. The function of the Socialist League was not to be a rival, but the means of recapturing the spirit of the pioneers of militant, idealistic, yet Fabian, Socialism.

The programme of the Socialist League at first consisted of measures they considered the next Labour Government should introduce without delay, the now familiar demand for the

"Immediate introduction of an Emergency Powers Act to forestall any sabotage by financial interests; the abolition of the House of Lords, the immediate nationalisation of the banks, land, mines, power, transport, iron and steel, cotton, and control of foreign trade; restricted compensation, acceptance of work or maintenance principle; and full rights for all State employees."

There was another feature of the programme which created bitter feelings among Trade Union leaders. This was the demand to change the structure of the Labour Party.

Nothing disturbs the Trade Union leaders so much as criticism and especially if it comes from people who are outside the unions and particularly from the intellectuals

"At present," Sir Stafford argued, "the agendas of the national conference are not discussed by the union branches and many unions cannot even have the guidance of their own national conferences because they are held bi-annually. By the means suggested the rank and file of the Trade Unions would be able to discuss the resolutions and help to shape the policy of the Party "

Had the Socialist League contented itself as the propagandist of this programme, it would possibly have flourished long and not have come into fatal conflict with the Party. It was not content so to do but also sought to *shape the policy of the Party on current issues*. Here the Socialist League had failed to learn from the history of the Independent Labour Party and its attempt to function as a rival political party within the Labour Party. No party can long tolerate such a rival within it and Stafford Cripps was soon to learn this from his own experience.

Nevertheless his campaign for the Socialist League made him the most popular Labour Party leader in the country. He could fill the halls when most of the other Labour leaders could not get an audience. What he had to say certainly angered his political enemies, within and outside the Labour Movement. Even the "National" Government's Attorney-General took him to task and accused him of becoming an advocate of violent revolution. This was too much for Stafford and he wrote to Sir Thomas Inskip on March 15th, 1932.

"DEAR ATTORNEY-GENERAL—

"The enclosed cutting was brought to my attention in Glasgow. It formed part of the report in the *Glasgow Herald* of your speech at Bearsden.

"I should be obliged if you would inform me whether it sets out correctly your statement about myself, and if so would you be so good as to let me know when I 'told them the day of evolutionary socialism was past *and* the day of revolution, according to the manner of the Russian revolution, was now the political creed of the Party, etc' "

"Yours faithfully,

"R. STAFFORD CRIPPS "

Cripps enclosed the following newspaper cutting of a speech of Sir Thomas Inskip at Bearsden, reported in the *Glasgow Herald*, Tuesday, March 12th, 1932:

"The Socialist Party today stood for red-hot revolution. That was not an exaggeration or an imaginative effort of his party, because a gentleman who stood very high in the leadership of the Labour Party—Sir Stafford Cripps—had lately told them that the day of evolutionary Socialism was past and that the day of revolution, according to the manner of the Russian revolution, was now the political creed of the party which with one or two others he led."

The reply came.

"March 17th, 1932

"MY DEAR CRIPPS,

"In reply to your note, the enclosed report of my remarks is an accurate report so far as I can remember.

"The speech I had in mind was one delivered in Edinburgh on January 17th, to a Labour Party Conference

"Yours sincerely,

"T W H INSKIP"

Back to the Attorney-General went the following:

"March 18th, 1932

"DEAR ATTORNEY-GENERAL,

"Thank you for your note

"I am afraid the account that you saw of my speech must have been entirely different to any of those that I saw and can have no relationship to anything I said, as I have always condemned revolutionary means and the Communist movement which relies on such means. Will you be so good as to give me the reference to the report of my Edinburgh speech which you saw and which contained the passage to which you referred at Glasgow?"

"Yours faithfully,

"R. STAFFORD CRIPPS"

The Attorney-General was quite sure he had not misrepresented Sir Stafford, so back to the fray he came:

"March 17th, 1932.

"DEAR CRIPPS,

"If you will look at the report of your speech in the *Times* I think you will see I did you no injustice. I am told there was a much fuller report in the *Scotsman*. I accept, of course, your disclaimer of revolutionary means and of the Communist movement. But your repudiation of 'gradualness' (which I called 'evolutionary socialism') and your reference

to the Russian revolution and its result, and your final statement about pulling down the building, justified me, I think, in my observations. At any rate, a great many of your friends read your remarks as indication of your view that your party should adopt and indeed was going to adopt revolutionary plans, instead of the old and as you thought obsolete methods of 'gradualism' something sudden and drastic in fact like pulling down a building instead of repairing and enlarging and improving it.

"I write at length so that you may know what I have in mind and I do most respectfully think that there is no ground at all for the feeling which I gather you have, that I have treated your speech unfairly. If I have misunderstood you—as is possible—I am very sorry, but if I may say so, your language seemed to me very plain.

"Yours sincerely,

"T. W. H. INSKIP"

Inskip was nothing if not stubborn and Stafford was nothing if not tenacious.

"March 18th, 1932

"MY DEAR ATTORNEY-GENERAL,

"Thank you for your full and frank reply.

"I of course join issue with you on the interpretation you put on what I said at Edinburgh. I do not object to your strictures on the policy I advocate, but I think you must realise that it is hardly correct to say, 'I had told them . . . that the day of revolution . . . according to the manner of the Russian Revolution—was now the political creed of my party' when I had said precisely the opposite.

"There can only be one meaning in the minds of the public to the phrase 'according to the manner of the Russian revolution' and that is the use of force and bloodshed in bringing about a change. I have uniformly stated—as I did at Edinburgh—that I abhor such an idea and will have nothing to do with it.

"I have stated that I believed in a very rapid change of the present system by the method of Parliamentary Democracy. You may term that a 'revolutionary' change in the same sense as one speaks of a 'revolutionary' change in fiscal policy, but I am sure you must appreciate the difference between this use of the term revolutionary and the use you made of it by adding the qualification—'in the manner of the Russian revolution.'

"Yours faithfully,

"R. STAFFORD CRIPPS"

No amount of argument would budge Inskip. Determined to have the last word on the matter he wrote:

"18 3 32.

"MY DEAR CRIPPS,

"We cannot carry on indefinitely a correspondence, but perhaps I ought to send a final reply to your last letter. It never occurred to me to suggest that you advocated bloodshed, but when you said that 'the experiment in Russia taught them that, however Utopian it might be to imagine a state in which they had equality, at least it was a matter which could be put to practical experiment' I think I was justified in understanding you to mean that confiscation and wholesale nationalisation of a thorough-going and drastic character was the policy of yourself and your Party. Nor do I think that my paraphrase substituting 'evolutionary Socialism' for 'gradualness' and speaking of 'revolution according to the manner of the Russian revolution' was an unfair one.

"You and I are perhaps not likely to agree as to what is the fair inference from your language, but I entirely accept your statement that you are opposed to bloodshed.

"Yours sincerely,

"T W H INSKIP"

The Conservative and Liberal press were exasperated by Cripps' speeches at this time until they became scurrilous in the extreme.

One day he spoke of the obstruction likely to come from Buckingham Palace and that raised a howl which echoed round the world. He had said:

"When the Labour Party comes into power they must act rapidly and it will be necessary to deal with the House of Lords and the influence of the City of London. There is no doubt that we shall have to overcome opposition from Buckingham Palace and other places as well. It is absolutely essential that it should be made perfectly clear to the people exactly what it is we ask for the power to do. There must not be time to allow the forces outside to gather and to exercise their influence upon the Legislature before the key points of capitalism have been transferred to the control of the State. I look upon these two points myself as being land and finance. If other people become revolutionary then the Socialist Government, like any other Government, must take steps to stamp out the Revolution. The Socialist Government must not be 'mealy-mouthed about saying what they mean'."

What is called the "right wing" of the Labour Party and the Trade Union bureaucracy were as outraged by such speeches as were the Conservatives and the Liberals. The implication read into the speech was that Sir Stafford was a republican preaching

the abolition of the monarchy. The personal popularity of the British Royal Family in Britain is such that republicanism is identified with communism and is consequently "un-British". Naturally Sir Stafford repudiated the imputation. Whatever class-war speeches he may have delivered in the course of the years, the action he sought never reached beyond passive resistance, beyond individual refusal to do this or that. He advocated that all political changes be made through Parliament, which he believed to be capable of being reformed into a more democratic and efficient political institution.

These ideas ran through the publications of the Socialist League. Sir Stafford himself wrote one of its pamphlets entitled "Can Socialism come by Constitutional Methods?" He answered emphatically in the affirmative. Clement Attlee wrote another entitled "Local Government and Socialism". These were but two of a whole series of publications amplifying and explaining the programme which Sir Stafford and his friends were seeking to persuade the Labour Movement to adopt.

Suddenly the British Labour Movement shifted its attention from the lessons of the collapse of 1931, and the reshaping of a programme for the next Labour Government, to immediate history in the making. Hitler had come to power in Germany and the Socialist and working-class movement had been overwhelmed almost without resistance.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE STORM BURSTS

**H**ITLER'S accession to power in Germany in 1933 cannot be said to have come as a shock to the leaders of Britain. Certainly not one of them, neither Churchill, nor Baldwin, nor MacDonald, nor Chamberlain, showed the slightest alarm or thought of this new power which had arisen either "as a symptom of the decay of capitalism" or as a power that would tear up its treaties and leap at the weakened British Empire.

That the triumph of Hitler was a shock to the British Labour Movement there is no doubt. But it was in no condition to react towards this as it had done to earlier challenges. The splitting of the Labour Movement of the world into rival political internationals inhibited such action. Torn asunder in Germany, the Social Democrats and the Communists hated each other more than they did the common enemy and down they went like ninepins before the onslaught of the Nazi power. In Britain the split had not been on so large a scale. The membership of the Communist Party had up to this time never exceeded ten thousand members, but it had succeeded from time to time in organising its influence on a large scale within the Trade Unions and the Labour Party, and its working-class politics influenced many outside its organisational bounds. The effect of the Russian Revolution on the British working class had been far-reaching. The first great set-back to this influence followed the General Strike of 1926 and the rupture of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Unity Committee when the Soviet Trade Union leaders accused the Trades Union Congress leaders of letting down the miners and betraying the General Strike. From that time forward the Labour Party had pursued a relentless ideological war against the Communists and purged the party of them. Hence, when Hitler's blow fell, the Labour Party and the Trade Union leaders gave an answer which carried all the marks of this ideological warfare. They issued a manifesto "against Dictatorship from the Right and from the Left"—a philosophical dissertation which left the reader to infer that British Labour was opposed to both Nazism in Germany and the Communists everywhere.

The effect on Sir Stafford was quite different. He had had nothing to do with this division of the Labour Movement into rival camps. All this happened before he became a member of the Labour Party. He had joined the Labour Party because he wanted Socialism as the best means of living a Christian life and the establishment of human brotherhood in the life of society. His brief experience in political leadership had taken place in extraordinary circumstances, during which time Party warfare in Britain had turned itself dramatically into open class conflict. Tories, Liberals and a fraction of the Labour Party had formed themselves into a class bloc against the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. He had seen this combination beat the Trade Unions to almost a standstill in 1926 and 1927. He had seen this combination shatter the Labour Government of 1929-31 and, without the slightest scruple, ride roughshod over the working class and express its hatred of Soviet Russia in unmeasured terms. He observed the difference of attitude to the rise of Hitler to power.

On January 30th, 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. One month later the Reichstag building was fired and the Communist leaders Dimitrov, Popov, Tanev and Torgler were arrested and charged with complicity in the burning of the edifice. There was no hesitation in the reaction of Sir Stafford to this situation. He acted promptly on behalf of the five accused Communists. Writing to Dr Heinrich Ehlers, a prominent German lawyer, he said.

"The suggestion is current here that they (the accused) will be unable to get a fair trial as no lawyer will dare to go forward whole-heartedly with the defence. Three of the lawyers originally engaged have withdrawn . . ."

Within a few days he drew together prominent lawyers from eight countries, and formed them into an unofficial Legal Commission in London to enquire into the burning of the Reichstag. These lawyers included Arthur Garfield Hayes from the U.S.A., Johannes Huber from Switzerland, M. Moro Giasferi and M. Gaston Bergery from France, Dr. George Branting from Sweden, Dr. Pierre Vermeylen from Belgium, Dr. Valdemar Hvidt from Denmark, Dr. Bakker-Hort from Holland and D. N. Pritt, K.C., of England. Sir Stafford himself opened the enquiry and declared that the enquiry would be a "political trial in the fullest sense of the word." That enquiry established that the Nazis themselves had set fire to the Reichstag



with the object of creating a state of hysteria in the public, discrediting their opponents and seizing power

Shortly after these events he was called upon to show his full personal qualities, against a House of Commons hysterical with anti-Soviet rage. Six Englishmen employed by the Metropolitan-Vickers Company and working on contracts in Russia on the invitation of the Soviet Government were arrested on March 11th, 1933, charged with sabotage and espionage. That Englishmen should be engaged in such activities and that a foreign Government, and particularly the Soviet Government, should arrest them was unthinkable! The British Ambassador in Moscow was in a panic. Without stopping to make any enquiries whatever he telegraphed to the British Government saying:

"It is inconceivable that the Soviet Government can produce credible evidence of any criminal malpractice on the part of the company.

" . . . On the assumption that the Soviet Government do not at once liberate the prisoners I am inclined to suggest, at the risk of His Majesty's Government incurring an accusation of participation in prejudging an issue of which legal remedies have not been exhausted, that the Soviet Ambassador, London, should be frankly warned that if his Government wished to continue to entertain friendly relations with His Majesty's Government they must refrain from being drawn by an excessive zeal on the part of the police into permitting the trumping up of frivolous and fantastic accusations against a friendly and reputable British company. Otherwise it will obviously become impossible for any subject to conduct business in Russia, and conclusion of trade agreement will be pointless "

On March 15th, Mr. Baldwin, the Prime Minister, stated in answer to a question in the House of Commons:

" His Majesty's Government are convinced that there can be no justification for the charge on which the arrests were made. Sir Esmond Ovey has been instructed to represent in strong terms the grave view which they take of these proceedings against British subjects of high standing engaged in normal commercial pursuits to the benefit of both countries, and the unfortunate consequences to Anglo-Soviet relations which may follow unless it is rectified "

On March 20th, 1933, Anthony Eden, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, announced in the House of Commons that as a result of the arrests the negotiations for a new Anglo-Soviet Commercial Agreement had been suspended. Two of the accused, Mr. Nordwell and Mr. Monkhouse, were released on bail after forty-eight hours detention. On April 4th, 1933,

three others, Thornton, Gregory and Cushny, were released on bail but Mr. MacDonald was kept in custody. On April 5th, Sir John Simon, asked the House of Commons for authority to ban all Russian imports into Britain. It was most appropriate that it should be Simon who should have asked for this power for he was the Foreign Secretary who had declined to ask for such power against Japan when the latter made war on China.

Rarely has there been such a scene as that which the House of Commons presented. It was packed, hostile, hysterical, almost uncontrollable. M.P.'s were standing round the sides of the House. The galleries were full. When Sir Stafford rose to speak he had to wait several minutes for the Speaker to quieten the howling Conservatives. He stood calmly, waiting, and gave a glance to the Ladies' Gallery, where his wife sat quietly and intently, watching the ordeal below. At last he could begin. He spoke with that quiet, reasoning precision with which he argued his cases before the judges of the courts.

"The House is being asked to grant powers to the Government as against a particular foreign nation—powers which, as far as I know, are unprecedented in any recent years in the history of this country. Beyond the right to make the fullest enquiry and obtain the fullest information, international law recognises no right of interference in the internal affairs of a foreign country, unless certain specified states of affairs can be shown to have arisen with regard to the nationals of another country. "

The House did not want to listen to legal arguments. The pack was howling. Interruption followed interruption. Time and again the Speaker had to remind the House that this was a debate. Sir Stafford continued, criticised the Ambassador for pre-judging the guilt or innocence of the arrested men. He turned on the Government because of their instructions to the Ambassador. He finished with the declaration:

"I feel convinced that if we continue to pile up ill-feeling in Russia by the statements that are in the White Paper and by this sort of emergency action, which is being taken to treat Russia in a way in which no country has ever been treated before, and by this House of Commons, we are seriously jeopardising the fate of the men who are still in their hands, and who it is for them to deal with and not for us."

At the end of his speech of an hour's duration against a continued barrage of interruptions, the Labour Opposition was overwhelmingly defeated. The trial began in Moscow on

April 12th, 1933 All the Russians who had been arrested at the same time as the accused British pleaded guilty. So, also, did Mr MacDonald, who had been refused bail. Mr Thornton, who had pleaded guilty in the preliminary examination, now pleaded "not guilty". The other Britishers pleaded "not guilty". The outcome of the trial was that Messrs. Monkhouse, Nordwell and Cushny were sentenced to deportation from the U S S R, Mr. MacDonald to two years imprisonment and Mr Thornton to three years imprisonment. They decided to appeal to the Supreme Court as they were entitled.

Without waiting for the result of the appeal, the British Government, on the following day, issued a proclamation prohibiting as from April 26th, 1933, the importation of 80 per cent of the Soviet commodities which had been on the British import schedule. The Soviet Government answered in kind. There was considerable excitement for some weeks and the British Government did not fare well in the eyes of the public. Criticism mounted against it, especially after the reports of the trial were published. Soon the Government retreated and Simon took advantage of the opportunity presented by the presence of Litvinov at the World Economic Conference, held in London at the end of June, to negotiate for the re-opening of trade with the Soviets. On July 1st, the Soviet Embassy issued a statement announcing that the petitions of Mr. Thornton and Mr. MacDonald, who had been sentenced to three and two years imprisonment respectively, had been commuted to deportation. On the same day the British Government announced the end of the embargo and a date for resuming the negotiations for an Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement. During the whole of this period Sir Stafford's prestige in the House of Commons stood exceedingly high. But it was quite obvious that had the British Government been in a position to make war on Soviet Russia they would have done so.

The rise of the Nazis to power in Germany and the reactions of the National Government to it, along with their hatred of Soviet Russia, the first Socialist country of the world, together convinced him that the world was moving towards war and that the only force which could resist it was a *united working-class movement*. For this he was now prepared to work with all his might. It is at this moment that Cripps and the Socialist League begin to play the role of "Left" opposition within the Labour Party.

It was 1933 when, for the first time, Stafford Cripps led the Socialist League into action at the National Conference of the

Labour Party. The first resolution of the League was sponsored by a local Labour Party whose spokesman in the conference was Sir Charles Trevelyan. It was a lengthy resolution remarkable mainly in the policy it advocated. It assumed that war was on the way as an inevitable product of capitalism. It saw in Fascism a logical development of capitalism and how directly it was related to war. Raising the alarm concerning the turmoil and crisis conditions it expressed the view that war was on the way. No one was clear from whence the war would come or what would be the character of the war except that it would be a capitalist war. What then should be done? The Socialist League declared that its function was (this was the mind of Sir Stafford Cripps too and was to be the basis of his actions for some years ahead):

“To work within the Labour and Socialist International for an uncompromising attitude against war preparation; to pledge itself *to take no part in war* and to resist it with the whole force of the Labour Movement and to seek consultation forthwith with the Trade Union and Co-operative Movements with a view to the deciding and announcing to the country what steps, including a general strike, are to be taken to organise the opposition of the organised working-class movement in the event of war or threat of war, and urges the National Joint bodies to make immediate approaches to endeavour to secure international action by the workers on the same lines.”

Elderly Sir Charles Trevelyan, one-time Minister in a Labour Government, an orator of great power, now let loose torrential eloquence in the tradition of Jaurès. He declared:

“At no time has there been such a black outlook in the world. The great instrument for keeping the peace, the League of Nations, some day will be the machinery for international safety, but it will be when hearts are different and when Governments are different. This resolution is one of action. . . . The rulers must know that if war comes they will fight with a divided nation. They can make then bourgeois wars themselves but they will make it without the workers. Until we reach that point, until there is a workers’ movement bold enough to say that and to say it so that it is trumpeted throughout the world, there is no safety for the workers of any land . . .”

Mr. Percy Collick, a leader of the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen’s Union, followed with the declaration.

"All the work of this Conference this week, all your aspirations and all your resolutions are of no use unless you are perfectly clear and certain about the one that is before this Conference at this moment . . ."

Mr. H. L. Elvin, a member of the Executive of the Socialist League, stepped to the platform after Collick, declaring: "I believe that war is the acid test of Socialist conviction," and added passion to the rising temper of the conference. And then, tall, powerful-voiced Dr. Dalton, on behalf of the Executive of the Party, rose and in stentorian tones said:

"I rise to say that the Executive Committee accepts the resolution that has been moved. We rejoice to see the rising flame of hatred of war. We welcome the speeches that have been made . . ."

And the resolution calling for a General Strike against an unspecified war was carried unanimously. But it did not end there. Mr. Arthur Henderson, Chairman of the Disarmament Conference, capturing the spirit of the Conference in an historic oration, sought to restore the faith of all in the League of Nations. So impressed was Sir Stafford that he rose in the conference and asked that the Executive immediately issue Henderson's speech in pamphlet form for widespread distribution.

From this conference Sir Stafford went forth and with the Socialist League campaigned the country. His energy seemed inexhaustible. With fanatical persistence he expounded his theme—for working-class unity against war and Fascism. In the succeeding months he wrote his book, *Why This Socialism?* which explained the reasons for the faith that was his. His contact with Socialists of other countries also extended. As Austria became increasingly subject to the pressure of Hitler, he wrote to Parmoor on March 6th, 1934:

"MY DEAR PA,

". . . I have seen a great deal of people from Austria and the position is very bad indeed. We tried to put some pressure on the Government here to help and it may have had some restraining influence, although it looks as if conditions were getting worse. The Trade Unions are doing their best to give some help to the Socialists.

"The international situation generally seems to be getting worse, and with the increase of our air and navy estimates the position seems to be becoming more hopeless . . ."

This did not mean he was turning to pacificism. It meant that he distrusted capitalist governments. He did not think they

would use the arms for the right purpose and was accordingly opposed to such governments having the arms. His popularity in the Labour Movement increased month by month and in 1934 he was elected to the Executive of the Labour Party. The fears of more conservative Labour Party and Trade Union leaders mounted in almost equal ratio to Cripps' popularity, since his new role threatened their leadership. More than that, they feared the deeper political and social implications of the new Cripps crusade.

Parmoor was exceedingly pleased. He was ambitious for his son and never slackened in his good advice. Writing to Stafford in October, 1934, after a meeting with George Lansbury, he said.

"MY VERY DEAR STAFF,

"G Lansbury spent yesterday at Parmoor, much to the delight of Marion and myself. You know that I have a great admiration for him and his book (*My England*). It is a powerful work having regard to the conditions under which it was written.

"He spoke most kindly and generously about you. I hope that you will see much of him and help him in his position as Leader in the House of Commons.

"His views on the general outlook are and always have been similar to my own. I do not mean on every point, but in the main directions, and collective team action, to be successful, must have a certain element of give and take. Please think of this, and of your father's and Lansbury's views. 'More haste less speed' are not counsels of despair but a just appreciation of the conditions of stable progress. I am not afraid of the future in this world or elsewhere, but I want the time to come when you will be chief pilot of a strong Labour Party. . .

"Your v affectionate father,

"P."

To which Stafford replied on October 17th, 1934:

"MY DEAR PA,

"Very many thanks for your letter. I heard from G L. I very much hope he will remain on as leader in the House of Commons, as I think at the moment it is very vital. I entirely agree about the 'give and take' that is necessary. If I did not I should no longer be in the Party, but I propose to stay there as long as the Party will have me. I am quite certain that the one thing that is essential above all others at the present moment is unity."

Just about this time there occurred one of the greatest mining disasters in the history of the British coalfields. A terrific ex-

plosion at the Gresford Colliery in North Wales resulted in a death roll of 265. All Britain was staggered by the magnitude of the disaster. Naturally, an official enquiry had to be held before the Chief Inspector of Mines, Sir Henry Walker. Sir Stafford Cripps was asked by the miners to conduct their case with two representatives from the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. The mine-owners briefed two lawyers, Mr A. T. Miller, K.C., and Mr Hartley Shawcross, to represent them.

Such enquiries are usually routine in their character but the magnitude of this disaster which had stirred the country demanded the most exhaustive investigation. Such an enquiry requires of any investigators, not merely a knowledge of the laws governing the operation of the mining industry, but an intimacy with the whole technique of mining. To establish the facts was possible only by the examination of witnesses.

The enquiry opened at Wrexham in October, and Sir Stafford appeared, free of charge, on behalf of the North Wales Miners' Association. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, not yet believing that a mere lawyer would know the right questions to ask about a pit, was represented by its officials.

"Sir Stafford," writes Geoffrey Wilson, "arrived in Wrexham the night before the enquiry opened without, as far as anybody knew, any detailed knowledge of the technical side of mining. But he was fortunate in having as his technical adviser Mr. D. R. Grenfell (subsequently Minister of Mines in the Churchill wartime Coalition Government), one of the South Wales Miners' Members of Parliament, and a fully qualified mine manager. Within thirty-six hours of his arrival in Wrexham, Sir Stafford began a cross-examination of the manager of the mine, which continued mercilessly for two and a half days. The cross-examination took the form at which Sir Stafford has no superior. So skilfully were the questions selected and put that the manager had no option but to agree with the course of the argument put forward by the questioner and there was universal admiration for the grasp of technical detail which Sir Stafford had acquired.

"Day by day the newspapers gave the greatest prominence to the proceedings and everybody was shocked by the revelations which Sir Stafford's ruthless cross-examination brought forth. He extracted from the management that a considerable time before the explosion dust samples had contained combustible matter verging on fifty per cent; that miners were firing sixty-three shots a shift even when it was acknowledged to be dangerous to fire more than forty-five and the management had

done nothing to prevent this; there had never been a measurement of the air in the three districts where the explosion occurred; the junior inspector of mines had to admit that although twelve days before the explosion had occurred it had been reported to him that there was gas in the pit he had taken no steps to verify the report but had been content to accept the manager's explanation that the gas was in a cavity."

As a result of the enquiry, which lasted thirty-five days, a manager of the mine was imprisoned and the Government had to respond to the indignation of the country concerning the revelations of the court by setting up a Royal Commission to enquire into the safety of the coal-mines throughout the country. Thus it happened that Sir Stafford was increasingly in the public eye. When he was not attacking the Government from the front Opposition bench, he was holding public attention by his criticism of the Labour policy from the platform of the Socialist League. And time and again he was hitting the news headlines with some handling of a case in the courts or winning the confidence and admiration of great bodies of workers by the way in which he used his great professional qualifications on their behalf. His family friends admired him too. Lord Sankey wrote to Parmoor saying:

"Stafford is making a great name for himself. I admire him for his courage. It is a great tribute to him that everybody recognises his selflessness and honesty of purpose. I hope he will not overwork, that is his only danger."

Shortly after the Gresford enquiry, Stafford had a brief interlude from his activity in England. He went to America. On April 15th, 1935, while at sea, he wrote to Parmoor:

"MY DEAREST PA,

"This is a very nice simple clean steady boat and very empty. Its only disadvantage is a rather tying disregard of punctuality. We are 24 hours late and unless everything goes according to plan may be 48 hours late, which will probably upset all our plans hopelessly but we shall not know until we see John at New York."

[Cripps' son was at this time travelling in America as a member of the Oxford debating team, which included also Michael Foot and David Lewis. E. E.]

"I have read Laski's new book on the State which is really *excellent* also George Soule's *The Coming American Revolution* which is good too and one or two other books on economics, and a number of articles and pamphlets.



"The rather vague news on the wireless about Stresa doesn't look too good. It's the old story of agreements which no one trusts and which mean nothing but words. Every day makes me realise the more the futility of attempting any sort of permanence of agreement within Capitalism. It is very depressing. I hope to see Roosevelt in Washington this week.

"God bless you both,

"STAFF"

Within a few weeks he was home again. His trip could not be described as a holiday visit. He went to Washington, New York, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto. He talked with President Roosevelt; Henry Wallace, who was then Secretary of Agriculture; Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labour, the British Ambassador, newspaper editors, Averell Harriman, Drew Pearson; Justices of the Supreme Court, leaders of the American Federation of Labour, the American Socialist Party and officers of the Labour Movement, Ministers and lawyers. When he arrived in Canada he visited Mr. Bennett, the Prime Minister, and many of the leading personalities of Canadian politics. He returned at the beginning of May.

Meanwhile he had posted an abstract of his conversation with President Roosevelt to his father, Lansbury and Attlee. He wrote it on April 17th, 1935, immediately after his visit to the President, from his quarters at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. It read

"I lunched today alone with the President in his office, spending just an hour with him.

"He was extremely charming, frank and friendly and spoke both of American domestic affairs and international matters.

"He was oppressed with the difficulties of the situation and the international exchange and monetary situation troubled him. He was working towards a stable price level in terms of wholesale commodity prices in America trying to get back to the average level of 1924-27, when the bulk of the private indebtedness grew up in America. The index was 55 when he took office compared to 100 for the average of 1924-27 and it had now risen to 80 and he hoped to get it back to 95-100 gradually, and then keep the dollar value fixed in terms of a commodity index. He was most anxious other countries should do the same, at whatever level suited their internal economy, especially England. He deplored the storing up of gold in U.S.A. and stated that every dollar bill now had a backing of gold 1.55 dollars silver 25 cents whereas 33 cents in all would be sufficient backing. The U.S.A. would be only too

glad to exchange this gold for foreign paper if gold was required elsewhere and countries would stabilise their monetary values on wholesale commodity prices 'It doesn't matter much what the list of commodities is' so long as it is stabilised on some list.

"As to the expenditure of the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  billion dollars granted by Congress he was puzzled as to what permanently effective form this expenditure could take Housing he looked upon as a temporary expedient Afforestation and soil erosion work was useful but would not absorb it all He is most anxious not to create a large body of *semi-skilled* workers and then leave them with nothing to do when the money is spent.

"He was very pleased with the work that had been done in the camps for the younger men whereby 350,000 had been put to work and were contributing twenty-five dollars out of the thirty dollars paid them per month to the upkeep of their families

"He was hankering after 'small town' development, that is a small urban centre working in with a surrounding rural area and in effect exchanging their commodities—of the workers doing part time in the factories and part time on the land, but realises that this can of course be no solution for the large industrial centres

"He likened the problem of the diversity of climates, populations, races and creeds in America to that in Russia

"He was very antagonistic to Father Coughlin and Huey Long He said that he had told Upton Sinclair he would back him if he would limit all his schemes to strictly state matters, but that his suggestions as to currency and credit were impossible to inter-state commercial dealings

"He hoped to get a measure of control over both monetary and credit policy through the new banking bill which would be sufficient to enable the value of the dollar to be controlled

"It was not possible to get any distinctive impression as to general policy, which one got the idea of being experimental, with its sole positive objective the monetary idea outlined above

"On the international side the fear of Japan was obviously quite real and there was a total disbelief in any pacific intentions of Germany, and when I suggested—to test the effect—that Germany might not really be so warlike as he suggested he said 'I hope you won't become a second Lord Haldane!'

"We discussed the necessary economic basis for peace and he agreed on the necessity for some economic arrangement as to war materials in the world generally but thought it no good suggesting any internationalisation scheme 'as it would only be laughed at', though he agreed nothing could be done as to disarmament till this was settled 'It's no good having another World Economic Conference' showed that he was thoroughly disillusioned by that attempt. He was not very polite about

Simon' who is obviously not persona grata in this country any more than he is at home. He was rather despairing as to Peace prospects, though he agreed as to the wide-spread and sincere desire of the people. I pointed out that this was ineffective and hopeless as there was no lead of a realistic kind given to it, pointing out the economic necessities of the situation, and that I believed if someone in his position could enunciate the proposition it would, although not immediately accepted, create a great impression and provide a rallying point for peace-loving people to make their work effective.

"He was taken with the idea but said it would require a lot of detailed working out and that he had at present nothing but the vague general conception of necessity. If I could get a scheme or plan in broad outline worked out, it would interest him very much to see it and study it. Before I left he was, I think, struck with the possibility of making some such proposal.

"These are the general lines of the talk, which covered a great number of other incidental matters. My whole impression was of an honest anxious man faced by an impossible task—humanising capitalism and making it work. A man full of charm with whom it would be possible to discuss anything and settle most things if he trusted you."

Parmoor acknowledged his son's memorandum but did not discuss it. He was immersed in what was happening at Stresa and repeating his old struggle for the Geneva Protocol. On May 3rd, 1935, he wrote to Stafford.

"Thank you very heartily for your letter and the Memorandum of your talks with Roosevelt. They are both of much interest to me, and I shall hope for a talk with you before long after your return. Did you see a very short letter of mine in the *Times* on Stresa and Geneva? You know that I am a believer in the League of Nations Covenant, but I found out at Geneva that Tories and officials of the Service departments and of the Foreign Office, although issuing any number of softly-worded peace suggestions, yet always desired to put the Geneva Protocol as far away as possible and to diminish its influence. . . .

"I have sent your Memorandum to dear old George Lansbury. I hope he may come here for a short visit. I am a great admirer of his and of his straight-forward simplicity. I have just read through again the Memorandum of your talk with Roosevelt, but it is too complicated to write about. I should much value a talk with you when there is time. I have already written about the League of Nations—in my opinion the Americans have never cared really to understand its basic principle, although I saw many of them at Geneva."

In the same period the Labour Party geared its policy on foreign affairs to the League and its Covenant more ardently than ever before and forgot all about its resolution of 1933. But not so Sir Stafford and the Socialist League. The Italians invaded Abyssinia, the developing war was coming nearer home and an answer had to be given to the question. "What are we to do about it?" The Labour Party was uninfluenced by the dubiety of the "National" Government's attitude to the League, and urged that the League of Nations implement Article XVI of the Covenant and apply sanctions to force Italy to cease her war on Abyssinia. Sir Stafford and the Socialist League opposed this policy. Stafford's views differed from Parmoor's, which appeared to be more favourable toward the policy of the Labour Party.

Stafford kept Parmoor in touch with the diplomatic situation.

"March 13th, 1935

"MY DEAREST PA,

"You will probably have seen that I spoke in the House on this matter [Foreign Policy]. It seems to me that the position is getting very serious, but in spite of their large majority I think the Government was probably shaken up a bit as a result of the debate and the obvious interest which is being taken in the country on the Peace question. . . I had a very long talk with Maisky the other night on the whole matter and he is very much alarmed at the Eastern situation and thinks that the only chance at the moment is to get an Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance, but it does not look as though our Government is really going to press this on the Germans, and short of this nothing I think can even temporarily appease the Eastern difficulties . . ."

Stafford wrote more specifically, later, on the sanctions question and called from Parmoor the following

"Parmoor,

"17th September, 1935.

"Henley-on-Thames

"MY DEAREST STAFF,

"We are delighted to hear that Lansbury is with you, and I only write further on the political outlook, because I think you have not quite understood my view from your letter. You say that you agree with me that we should not support the National Government in regard to sanctions, although our reasons for this differ. I think that this puts my view rather too high. My objection was intended to be levelled against military sanctions because I believe myself that the difficulty can be

overcome without them, and that, if it comes to a question of military sanctions, there will be considerable difference of opinion

"You affect father,

"P "

In the middle of the year the Socialist League held its Annual Conference at Bristol, where, after a great debate, the course Sir Stafford would pursue was finally decided. It had happened in the course of 1934 that Mr. J. T. Murphy, who had become the General Secretary of the Socialist League, differed greatly from Sir Stafford in his estimate of the trends in the international situation, and the policy to be pursued. He was permitted to submit an alternative resolution to the Conference as a means of sharpening the issues in the debate.

Murphy argued that whilst it was perfectly true that the "National" Government was pro-Fascist and its diplomacy aimed at a four-power pact of Britain, France, Germany and Italy against the Soviet Union, there was a fundamental conflict of interests between Germany and Britain, and Germany and France, which would drive them to war against each other, and Britain and France would be driven into an alliance with Soviet Russia despite the hatred of the capitalist Governments for the latter. He said it did not follow so simply as had been surmised that because of the mutual hatred of Germany and Japan for Soviet Russia they would necessarily declare war on Russia at the same time. It might be that Japan would utilise the pre-occupation of the Western Powers with the war in Europe to pursue her independent war on China and wait for a more convenient moment to strike at Russia. He advocated, therefore, working-class support for "Collective Security" against the Fascist powers and an alliance of Britain, France and Soviet Russia.

Sir Stafford held the view that:

"If war comes before the workers in Great Britain have won power, that war will be an imperialistic war. A 'National' Government may claim to be fighting on behalf of the League system, in conjunction with the U.S.S.R.; it will in fact have led the country into war to preserve the interests of British Imperialism."

Visualising that the coming war would be a war of the capitalist states against the U.S.S.R. he declared:

"A Socialist Government, when it comes to power, should make it clear to the world that it will do everything possible to support the U.S.S.R.

Negotiate a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the U S S R and with any other Socialist States . ”

But he warned the workers

“not to be misled into support of a war entered into by a ‘National’ or capitalist Government in the name of the League of Nations, nor to overestimate the effect of the entry of the U S S R. into the League . ”

A natural sequel to this development, when the Labour Party Executive announced its policy of support for League sanctions against Italy, was Sir Stafford’s resignation from the National Executive of the Labour Party in order to be more free to expound his own views. At the same time, this meant he would cease to be an Opposition front bench leader too and break his partnership with George Lansbury and Clement Attlee

This was a disappointment to Parmoor, who wrote to Stafford.

“19th September, 1935.

“Many thanks for your letter and the report of your speech. I do not disguise my disappointment at the resignation of your position on the governing body of the Labour Party and wish that I could have a talk with you. The decision whether to resign on an inability to uphold the whole programme of a party, though agreeing with a great part of it, is always a difficult one, and must be decided by the person interested with courage and sincerity. I do not doubt the choice but still regret it ”

Stafford nevertheless maintained his position and answered:

“Goodfellows,

September 20th, 1935

“MY DEAREST PA,

“Thank you for your letter. I thought the matter of resignation over very carefully and I was quite convinced at the present moment, with so much uncertainty and differences of view in the Party, it was wiser to get out of the Executive in order to show people where I stood.

“I quite realise that the smaller Nations at Geneva have a great desire for protection, but it has become more and more obvious every year that the League is being run by France and England for purely imperialist purposes, and I think the people must be made to face up to this or else we shall be led under the banner of the League to another imperialist war.

“Yours ever,

“STAFF ”

Momentous changes were afoot. The time had come when it would no longer be possible for a pacifist of the type of George

Lansbury to hold the reins of leadership. When the Labour Party Conference met at Brighton in 1935 the Labour Party was nearer to a split than at any time since the departure of the I.L.P. The Italian war on Abyssinia was the issue of the day and two men would hold the centre of attention. They were Sir Stafford and Mr. George Lansbury. The Brighton Conference of 1935 saw Sir Stafford in bitter conflict with the leadership of the Party.

Dr. Hugh Dalton opened fire for the Executive. He made it perfectly clear that the Labour Movement of Britain was "firmly united in its opposition to the policy of imperialist aggression", and the conference

"Called upon the British Government in co-operation with other nations represented at the Council and Assembly of the League to use all the necessary measures provided by the Covenant to prevent Italy's unjust and rapacious attack on the territory of a fellow member of the League. The Conference pledges its firm support of any action consistent with the principles and statutes of the League to restrain the Italian Government and to uphold the authority of the League in enforcing peace. . ."

He quoted Sir Stafford's speeches on Japan's invasion of Manchuria. Having cast Sir Stafford and George Lansbury aside, he went on to make a most powerful speech justifying the policy of the Labour Movement.

Sir Stafford promptly followed Hugh Dalton. Without any preamble he went direct to the difference between himself and the Party Executive:

"Let me go straight to the heart of the controversy so far as I am concerned. To me the central factor in our decision must turn, not so much upon what we as a country should or should not do, but upon who is in control of our actions. I cannot rid my mind of the sordid history of capitalist deception. The empty hollow excuses of 1914, which I was then fool enough to believe, echo through the arguments of today, the 'War to end War', the need to fight to save democracy, the cry to crush the foul autocracy of Prussian militarism, all have their counterparts in today's arguments. . . . When economic sanctions are applied a state of war automatically exists, and we must be prepared to defend those sanctions against military attack. We must envisage the possibility of war. Whether we call it military sanctions or war matters not; it is the same thing. That means the use by our Government of the workers for military action against the workers, in this case, of Italy. . . . If the

attack on Italian Fascism turns to an Italian revolution as some people hope, our 'National' Government will not use its forces to assist the Italian workers to freedom. I certainly do not and cannot trust the capitalists, and I have heard no arguments which would convince me that it is right to trust them not to misuse their military power in the future as they have always done in the past . . . Had we a workers' Government in this country, as they have in Russia, the whole situation would be completely different. Then, with a Socialist Government there would be no risk of imperialist and capitalist aims being pursued, as today it is certain they are being, and will be, pursued. . .

"No League system has a reality within imperialism. . . . I have been accused of changing my views on this topic. I have changed them, because events have satisfied me that now the League of Nations, with three major powers outside it, has become nothing but the tool of the satiated Imperialist powers. France and Great Britain determine its use. . . .

" . . . I wish to God the workers were in control in this country and so could make their power effective as the Russian workers can do today in their own country."

A voice called: "Through the League."

Not to be side-stepped, he retorted:

"Through their own Government which they control. That is the vital factor. If we feel a desperate urge to do something at all costs in the present situation, we must fall back on the attempt to use working-class sanctions. Those at least we can keep within the workers' control."

Marchbanks, the leader of the Railwaymen's Union, would have nothing to do with this talk of "workers' sanctions" and shouted: "Let those who will not observe the decision of the Annual Conference . . . get out."

A miners' leader referred to Sir Stafford as the "most colourful figure which the workers of this country have produced since Mosley"!

Clement Attlee, one-time supporter of unilateral disarmament, former Under-Secretary for War, who had acclaimed the 1933 resolution for a General Strike against war, turned on his erstwhile colleague. He did not think that sanctions against Mussolini would lead to war. Then came George Lansbury to make his pathetic swan-song, re-affirming his renunciation of force.

There was not a man or woman in that conference who did not realise that Lansbury's declaration was the wind-up of the career of a remarkable man in the leadership of the Labour



Movement There was not one who did not realise that he could no longer remain in the leadership of the Party, and that he would resign immediately. But that was not enough for Mr. Ernest Bevin. This short, physically powerful, sombre figure whose whole career had been full of personal grievances, ambled to the platform to mouth the obvious and boot the aged leader as he fell from grace.

He accused Lansbury of "taking his conscience from body to body, asking to be told . . . what to do with it." That, of course was not Lansbury's "crime". It was just the opposite of that Lansbury had pitted his conscience against the conference and refused to be told "what to do with it". But having disposed of Lansbury, Bevin turned his attention to Sir Stafford, whom he attacked with great bitterness. He opened fire in this way.

"People have been on this platform talking about the destruction of capitalism. The middle classes are not doing too badly as a whole under capitalism and Fascism. Lawyers and members of other professions have not done too badly . . ."

That was his "comradely" introduction to his counter-attack on Sir Stafford. Of course, this was not the first time Bevin and Cripps had been in conflict. They had opposed each other in the 1932 Conference when Sir Stafford stood for the nationalisation of all the banks and Bevin opposed the nationalisation of the Joint Stock Banks. Bevin, too, resented the existence of the Socialist League, which he regarded as Cripps' personal organisation of political power within the Labour Party. Bevin had also all the class prejudice of the conservative working man against the intellectuals. He proceeded to mobilise this prejudice, which is strongly entrenched in the Trade Unions, instead of dealing with the issue of Stafford's anti-war and anti-Fascist policy. He accused Cripps of wilfully staying away from Executive meetings, and, referring to one occasion on which Stafford was absent, said:

"And so vital was it to you, that Cripps never turned up. If I feel bitter, please understand it. I cannot play with my members like this."

Having launched this accusation of absenteeism against Stafford he then accused him of attempting to split the Party. He went on:

"And who am I to let my personality protrude as compared with this great Movement? Who is any man on this platform? I do sincerely ask

this Conference to appreciate the Trade Unionist's position Sir Stafford Cripps said there would be no split. He has done his best ."

That was not enough. From the accusation of "splitter" he proceeded to accuse Cripps of having delivered to the Executive of the Labour Party a "cowardly stab in the back" by his resignation from that body when he could no longer agree with them on policy. The bitterness with which Bevin waged his fight against Cripps on this occasion revealed to all the world that these two men had little in common beyond their membership of the same party. It almost appeared, on this occasion, that Bevin was intent on driving Stafford out of the Party whilst the going was good. Certainly great changes had to take place in the political history of the Labour Movement before these two would be found walking in step as leaders of the same Government and Party.

The conference debate continued. Poor George Lansbury tried to explain how wrong Bevin was in his personal attacks upon him. Stafford ignored the personal attack and went his way. It did appear at one moment as if the Labour Party was on the verge of a big "purge" until Mr. Herbert Morrison, adroit as always, wound up the debate with a speech calculated to calm the troubled scene with a plea for toleration. Nevertheless, the conference supported the Executive and defeated Sir Stafford's policy. George Lansbury departed from the leadership. But Stafford Cripps held to his view and decided to fight back.

## CHAPTER 9

### IN AND OUT

AS soon as the Brighton Conference ended Sir Stafford went his independent way, unperturbed by Mr. Ernest Bevin's exhibition of mass power. But the political mood of the country was against him. The Labour Party's advocacy of "Collective Security" through the League of Nations was exceedingly popular. The League of Nations Union, ostensibly a non-party organisation founded after the First World War to popularise the League of Nations, cleverly harnessed the feeling throughout the country and carried through what became famous as the Peace Ballot. Through the Ballot, 11,500,000 people, almost unanimously, voted for the British Government to carry out its obligations to the League of Nations and its Covenant, including the use of economic sanctions, collective security and the reduction of armaments.

From an attitude of scoffing at the Peace Ballot, the Government suddenly made a tactical manoeuvre and appeared to accept the "will of the people" with an eye on an imminent General Election. It even led the League of Nations to apply limited sanctions against Italy. This gave some substance to the idea that after all the "National" Government did really stand for the League of Nations and all it implied.

The "old hands", Baldwin and MacDonald, were not infants in electioneering and preparing for elections. Trimming their sails to the Peace Ballot results, they also seized upon the occasion of the Silver Jubilee, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of King George V's coronation, to make it into a really fine Conservative Party "Jubilee". So Sir Stafford Cripps, at Caxton Hall in September, 1935, again hit the headlines of Britain's newspapers by saying of this event:

"The new phenomenon in our national life of a 25-year Jubilee has been sedulously surrounded by the politicians with a well-cultivated ballyhoo from which they hope and indeed boast that they will derive electoral benefit . . . It is understandable and reasonable that the

people should express their loyalty to their nation through the medium of a titular sovereign on appropriate occasions.

"Apart from that aspect of the question, there is every reason in the tragic and depressed circumstances of the workers today why they should accept an opportunity for the relief and escape of a national jollification.

"But neither of these matters offers justification for a ruling class utilising the loyalty of the people for the purpose of assisting them in an electoral campaign. The expenditure of large sums of money up and down the country to this end cannot be justified. The Conservative Party have claimed as their own the National Flag and the National Anthem, and they desire to monopolise for their own purpose the national loyalty."

That speech raised a storm. To describe the celebration as "ballyhoo" shocked the conscience of every newspaper editor, and it was at once linked up with Cripps' earlier speech on "Buckingham Palace" and given a republican slant. Once again he had "put his foot in it" for his Labour Party colleagues. But he was seeing things a little clearer than they. He saw that Baldwin was skilfully out-manceuvring them for the election.

In a broadcast on October 25th, 1935, Baldwin said: "We do not want and no one will propose large forces for this country." Three days later he amplified this by declaring

"There has not been, there is not, and there will not be any question of huge armaments or materially increased forces."

So well did he pursue his campaign that he completely took the wind out of the Labour Party's sails.

On October 15th the Labour newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, as good as handed the General Election to the Government. It reported:

"The General Election will be fought on domestic issues and not exclusively on foreign policy. Six months ago it looked as if foreign policy would dominate the election. Between Labour and the Tories there was a gulf that seemed unbridgeable on foreign policy. Now, incredible as it would have seemed six months ago, the Government is supporting the League."

The "National" Government issued its election manifesto saying:

"The League of Nations will remain as heretofore the keystone of British policy. We shall continue to do all in our power to uphold

the Covenant and to maintain and exercise the efficiency of the League ”

Sir Stafford was taken in neither by the “ballyhoo” of the Jubilee or the cooing of Mr Baldwin. He saw that some trick was being played and in a speech at Birmingham, immediately after the Labour Party Conference, he said:

“Why is it that the Government have rushed the present election upon the country, right on top of the municipal elections? Because the Government are afraid that if it took place any later the crooked bargain which is going to be made with Mussolini, whereby a ‘sphere of influence’ over Abyssinia will be given to the Italians, will be flung back in the Government’s own face. The acid test of the Government’s sincerity will be whether Ethiopian independence emerges from this scuffle as it was last January ”

The election came in November, 1935. Campaigning in elections had by now become a commonplace incident in Cripps’ political life. He flung himself into this election with all his usual ardour. This time it was a straight fight between himself and a Major Church who stood as a “National Labour” candidate, i.e. a supporter of the MacDonald group. The major was defeated from the word “go”.

Stafford’s agent, Rogers, an exceedingly able organiser, marshalled his supporters enthusiastically and Stafford was unsparing in his efforts. Isobel Cripps joined in to campaign amongst the women of the constituency, and Stafford was returned triumphantly with a 7,000 majority in the election held on November 14th, 1935.

The Tories polled ten and a half million votes to Labour’s eight and a half million. The “National” Government won 387 seats to 154 seats for the Labour Party. Promptly, the Hoare-Laval double-crossing of Abyssinia, as foreshadowed by Sir Stafford, was effected and the Labour Movement was protesting on December 17th against the outrageous betrayal of League principles. No wonder Sir Stafford wrote in those days:

“The world will get tired of ‘perfidious Albion’ and we shall be set upon one day and left an isolated carcase to be picked by the new imperialist vultures. Robbed of our Empire and with no socialist confederation to take its place we shall indeed be the victim of a most unhappy end.”

Early in 1936 Stafford wrote to his father

" I am afraid the Labour Party leadership at the present time is extremely unsatisfactory. It is both hesitant and weak, and the Party in the House of Commons are not at all satisfied with it, but things will just have to go on as they are for the present, as the trouble is that the Party itself has no clear idea of its objectives or strategy.

"I fear we are moving towards a capitalist concentration of power in this country which is likely to draw the Trade Union and Labour elements with it. I agree with you that it is essential within Democracy to have a party form of Government with clear-cut distinction between Party policies.

"I am busy doing meetings in the country, but I am not taking any particular part in the House of Commons work as it is very difficult to do without making an apparent line of cleavage in the House which I think is unwise to develop at all at the present time."

Stafford was getting further and further away from Parmoor's policy although Stafford did much which Parmoor approved. The latter affectionately followed every step of his son with deep interest and concern. On reading an interview which Stafford had given to the *News Chronicle* in August, 1936, on the new extension of the war to Spain, he wrote:

"I am delighted with your interview today in the *News Chronicle*. It does not place the danger, underlying the present spread of Fascism and war, too high. Blum's policy deserves the support of every right-thinking man and places freedom and peace as the mainstays of the progress of civilisation. There can be no compromise such as the present Government appears to desire."

Shortly after the Franco revolt in Spain, George Lansbury, whose friendship with the Cripps family had grown with the years, visited Parmoor and the two elderly men showed to each other their concern for the course Stafford was taking. Parmoor wrote to Stafford on August 19th about their talk.

"Lansbury spent yesterday with us at Parmoor, and we talked a good deal of your future. He is evidently very anxious that you should resume your place on the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and stressed the view that it was a real drawback to the Labour Party Executive that you were not a member. Naturally I agreed with him and I hope you will think the matter over. One point was especially in his mind, that the Labour Party ought to make a move now, and press the Government to declare what they intend to do in the existing Spanish crisis.

"I should like to bring about a meeting of you and Lansbury, as soon

as it can be conveniently arranged, and I am sure if you make a move, you will find a ready response from him "

General Franco and his officers openly backed by Hitler and Mussolini had struck a military blow at the Liberal Republican Government of Spain which had just been elected. The Liberal Government of Spain had been accepted into the League of Nations. Its representative had taken his place at the Assembly of the League. The world was shocked by the spread of war to Europe and feared its further extension. And the question was asked, "What should Britain do about it?" There was no panic in the ranks of the "National" Government. The pattern of its policy from 1931 had become clearly defined. As it had aided the Japanese and Mussolini and made a deal with Hitler, so it would facilitate the triumph of Franco and use the League for the purpose.

The question this time was not that of the application of sanctions by the League, but whether the constitutionally-elected Government of Spain, recognised as a member of the League of Nations, was entitled to obtain arms from other countries in order to restore law and order within its own territory. Franco was obtaining arms galore from Hitler and Mussolini. The democratic republicans were getting none. The League Governments declared for "Non-Intervention" in the dispute and, behold, the Labour movements of Britain and France echoed the Non-Interventionists.

When the Spanish Fascist revolt began against the Republican Government Cripps was naturally on the opposite side to that of the "National" Government. When the Edinburgh Conference met in October, 1936, he was ready for the next stage of the struggle with the Labour Party Executive. What a scene! Real war was on the agenda of the Conference. There was no time now for Jauresian flights of oratory about war in general. They were to be put to the "acid test", and the Trade Union leaders had already lined up the Labour Movement behind the policy of "Non-Intervention". They had now to get endorsement from the conference. It was known that two delegates were on their way from Spain to the conference. On with the debate, then, and get it over before the delegates arrive! The Rt. Hon. Arthur Greenwood, Deputy-Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, led the way, seeking endorsement of "Non-Intervention".

He struck the right chords of sympathy:

"All of us feel alike in our hearts about the tragedy of Spain today, and in what I have to say I want you to believe that those who have spent very many weary hours and many sleepless nights over this problem feel as you feel about the events of the past two months . . .

"I admit and have said in public, and I have written, that I regard this policy of non-intervention as a very, very bad second best . . ."

But that was the only policy he had to recommend. Then Grenfell, another member of the National Council of Labour, an M. P. and miners' leader, followed him and finally got himself into the position of accusing those who disagreed with the policy of non-intervention of being "warmongers".

Mr. Bevin advised the conference delegates "not to vote . . . as if this Report confirms Non-Intervention, but confirms the active work that the National Council is trying to do, and back its efforts to assist Spain to the best of its ability."

How to vote for "Non-Intervention" and against "Non-Intervention" with one and the same vote, he did not explain. They voted for "Non-Intervention".

Two days later the Spanish delegates appeared on the platform and after they had moved the conference profoundly, and made the delegates feel ashamed, the Executive sent Mr. Attlee and Mr. Greenwood by night train to London to see Mr. Neville Chamberlain. After a chat with him they took the train back again and told the conference how moved Mr. Chamberlain was too, and how he had promised to look at the documents. That started the argument again but once more the powerful Mr. Bevin came down with his full weight, not for ending the disastrous policy of supporting "Non-Intervention" but in favour of "his officers sitting on the doorstep of Downing Street until a satisfactory reply was forthcoming", concerning the legal validity of the accusation against Hitler and Mussolini. Sir Stafford managed to persuade the conference to accept the change of words in the resolution which would make it clear that at least the conference itself was convinced that the Fascists had broken the "Non-Intervention Pact". Having expressed that conviction and having enthusiastically sung the "Red Flag" to show how their hearts had been moved to send bandages and cigarettes, Mr. Bevin's two-way vote went out to cheer Franco on his way. "Non-Intervention" had won. And the war rolled on with Britain in retreat all along the line.

The day after the conference had affirmed the policy of Non-Intervention in Spain it had to face the oncoming war again.



The Executive of the Labour Party, in conjunction with the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, had discussed the question of Labour's attitude to the Government's rearmament programme. The Executive of the Labour Party came forward to the conference with a remarkable resolution. It read thus:

" Armed strength of the countries loyal to the League must be conditioned by the armed strength of the potential aggressor. The Conference, therefore, reaffirms the policy of the Labour Party to maintain such defence forces as are consistent with our country's responsibility as a member of the League of Nations . . . "

Dr Hugh Dalton had to introduce this. Mr Arthur Henderson, Chairman of the dying Disarmament Conference, seconded the resolution.

Once again the conference was open for the struggle with the pacifists. Then Mr. Herbert Morrison set out to prove that the resolution was a change in Labour policy which was not a change. Up jumped Sir Stafford. He would have none of this facing both ways at once. He referred back the resolution. Sir Stafford said:

"I want to make the Conference realise that if they pass, or whether they reject, this document, they will not be recording any decision upon the vital matter that is before them. We are not concerned with the foreign policy of a Labour Government. That we have affirmed, and this document itself is a reaffirmation of it. What we are vitally concerned with is the action of the chief Opposition and as to whether that Opposition ought to make use of the British 'National' Government and the arms that it desires to acquire for the purpose of resisting the international menace of Fascism, or whether on the other hand we ought to dissociate ourselves entirely from the policy of the National Government and oppose that policy and oppose rearmament, which is the central feature of that policy today. . . Do not let us try to slip out of that decision by a document that could be interpreted as Dr Dalton interpreted it or as Mr Herbert Morrison interpreted it—two totally divergent views . . ."

Mr. Bevin demanded that the conference should not "pass the buck" to the Parliamentary Labour Party, which is precisely what the conference did and left the Parliamentary Labour Party to decide to support rearmament when expedient.

When Stafford Cripps left that conference he knew what he wanted and how he thought he could get it. He still wanted a

*British United Front of the Working Class* against the National Government. He was still interpreting politics from the class struggle point of view in opposition to the Labour Party Executive. He regarded the National Government as the arch-enemy and now set forth to make a joint campaign with the Socialist League, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party. But before his plans could mature he was thrust into the forefront of public attention by a sensational event which stirred the entire country.

On December 10th, 1936, King Edward VIII abdicated his throne in order to marry the American lady, Mrs. Simpson, who had some time previously divorced her husband. The proposed marriage shocked the Church conscience and there was some query as to whether such a marriage would be in conformity with the Constitution. The press asked the constitutional lawyer, Sir Stafford, for his opinion. He answered thus:

"Granted that we are to continue with a constitutional monarchy in this country, I personally cannot see any sufficient reason for forcing the abdication of the King because of the choice he has made. The only way in which the position could be altered would be by the passage of a law at the request of the King and in a form assented to by him. Mr Baldwin has stated that the Government will not initiate any such legislation. With this attitude I agree, as it seems to me to be quite unnecessary to deal with the present case as exceptional. It is important that people should realise that there is no such thing known to our laws asmorganatic marriage. The King's wife—whoever she may be—is the Queen Consort. The more vexed question that is raised is whether in this matter of his marriage the King is bound as a constitutional monarch to accept the advice of his Ministers. The answer to that question indubitably is, 'Yes, he is bound'."

King George VI succeeded his brother. About the time of the Coronation some months later Stafford again hit the headlines of the newspapers. This time he protested against the extravagance of the celebrations and their exploitation as a political stunt by the Tory Party. He said:

"In all this Coronation bunting or bunkum the Government appear to have overlooked the essential nature of the struggle which is proceeding in this country. I have no objection, let me say in parenthesis, to people celebrating if they wish on any proper occasion . . . But the present circus which is being carried on and organised, for which the Government, incidentally are paying three quarters of a million out of national funds—apart from the millions which are being spent municipally all over the

country—is simply being run as a political stunt by the Conservative Party ”

That set every newspaper in the country after him in spite of the fact that he had always been a supporter of a constitutional monarchy in Britain

Meanwhile, in January, 1937, with the plans well laid for the “Unity” campaign, Cripps joined with William Mellor, Aneurin Bevan, M.P., G. R. Strauss, M.P., and Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., in the launching of a new journal called *The Tribune*. In its first number he wrote an article in which he said.

“It is the business of every one of us by some means or another to bring back to the Labour Party that courage and self-belief which is the basis of victory ”

“We are often urged to make good resolutions on the first of January. They seldom last long, if made, because so often they are about small things that concern our private welfare. To-day I ask you to write this resolution. I pledge to my fellow workers throughout the world my faith to strive increasingly to work for unity as a step to power, by which power the workers shall control their lives in peace and security ”

This set the tone of the new campaign. There was no doubt about Cripps’ opposition to the leaders of the Labour Party in those days. Two weeks after launching *The Tribune*, at a special conference of the Socialist League, the Unity campaign was launched. The essence of the campaign, which was really anathema to the Labour Party leaders, was co-operation between the Socialist League, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party. They had agreed to cease attacking each other and sought to make an alliance with the Labour Party in rousing public opinion against the foreign policy of the National Government and for the unity of the three parties in the next election. When that campaign started there was no doubt whatever as to who would be its leader. Sir Stafford Cripps was the man. Remarkable meetings were held in the great industrial towns and cities. Cripps, Pollitt, Brockway, Bevan, Strauss, Gallacher, all appeared on the same platforms calling for the “United Front of the Working Class to fight Fascism and War.”

Professor Harold Laski, a member of the Labour Party Executive, gave the campaign his blessing although he was not sanguine about the possibilities of its success. He was very doubtful about the campaign winning the support of the Trade Unions; without the allegiance of at least some of the big

organisations they could not hope for success. Neither Stafford's father nor the Webbs were at all happy about Stafford's new venture. In fact, they found the general trend of things most disturbing. Sidney Webb expressed their views in a letter to Parmoor just after he had contributed articles to *The Tribune* which he thought should have been rejected on the grounds of policy. He was puzzled as to why Stafford and the editor, William Mellor, should have accepted them. Of the general situation he wrote

"I fully agree with your feeling of vexation and even disgust at the way things are being managed—whether by the Cabinet or the Executive of the Labour Party, or in the wider field of the League of Nations and international relations generally. The prospect for the world during the few years that you and I have to spend in it seem to me extremely dark. But I try to remember that those who are not actually 'in the saddle' or 'at the wheel' are necessarily unaware of very important considerations. We cannot expect to be able to form a valid judgement about complications about which we are necessarily ignorant. All that I feel able to do is to think my own thoughts and give them such utterance as opportunity allows."

After these observations Webb (Lord Passfield) turned to Stafford's new campaign and said of this:

"We are perturbed about Stafford's recent action in getting the Socialist League to enter into alliance with the I L P and the Communist Party in flat defiance of the Labour Party ruling. We have had no opportunity of talking it over with Stafford, and do not even know whether he had led the action or been outvoted. I can't see any advantage in what is called the 'United Front' where unity is most necessary, namely, in elections, as there can be no allocations of constituencies among the several sections (the example of France is misleading as there the second ballot makes things easier). In Great Britain the alliance with the Communist Party serves *only* to swell, by a small fraction, the numerical strength of a meeting or demonstration; and that only at the cost of lessening its effect on a hostile Cabinet or on employers or other classes prejudiced against Communism as being unchristian!"

"I wrote two articles in *The Tribune* at Stafford's request for the second and third issues, on 'The future of the British Labour Movement'. I wrote them before hearing anything of the move for a 'Popular Front'. Feeling that their effect was against this I submitted the articles in typescript to Stafford suggesting that, if they were not 'in tune', he

should return them to me as unsuitable. But to my bewilderment both he and Mellor welcomed them. Now I am more bewildered than ever as to what Stafford's line is. He may be right in giving up his position inside the Labour Party and taking on the role of a preacher or prophet, in the wilderness, if he is convinced of the ultimate rightness of his gospel. But I am a pedestrian accustomed all my life to be in a minority and looking for nothing but being outvoted, and nevertheless going on smiling and willing to talk—relying, I must confess, on my confident assurance that the majority will, whatever they now think, 'come my way' in the end! The *facts* will ultimately convince, either me, or the majority. The only puzzle to me is *how* best can I put my particular view forward, not *what* my view is."

Undeterred, stubbornly, Stafford proceeded on his way. The campaign waxed fast and furious. Tremendous meetings were held up and down the country and the press and the heads of institutions reacted according to their political bias. Stafford sought to stage a great United Front meeting in the Albert Hall, London, but the trustees refused him the use of the auditorium. Promptly, he countered<sup>d</sup> their refusal with an effort to bring political pressure to reverse the decision. He wrote to Stanley Baldwin, John Simon, Ramsay MacDonald, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Archibald Sinclair and Clement Attlee, saying:

"MY DEAR—

"I am writing to ask your assistance in a personal matter which I believe to be of some importance. I know you have often expressed yourself in favour of freedom of speech in the past and I therefore ask you in the concrete case mentioned below to put these beliefs into practice by using your influence as a well-known public figure in the political life of the country.

"I applied for use of the Albert Hall on a date upon which I had ascertained that it was free, but the Trustees have refused it to me without offering any reason. The only conceivable reason can be that they disapprove of my political views.

"I would ask you therefore to write a letter to the Trustees, in your personal capacity, protesting against the action that they have taken, and thus help in making a reality of the professions of freedom of speech, of which this is a most flagrant denial."

The Prime Minister acknowledged receiving Cripps' letter but declared that

"the matter of the use of the Albert Hall for a meeting is quite outside

my province and I should not think it right to intervene in the matter in any way."

Ramsay MacDonald, from the Privy Council office, wrote that

"It is quite impossible for me to divide myself into a private person and the Lord President of the Council in any relations I may have with the Trustees of the Albert Hall "

From Lloyd George came support for Cripps. He wrote:

"I think the conduct of the Trustees of the Albert Hall is monstrous and that a protest ought to be registered against it by all those who believe in liberty of speech. I will either write direct to the Trustees or send a letter to the Press in the course of the next few days."

Sir Archibald Sinclair, Liberal Party leader, and Clement Attlee, Labour Party leader, supported Cripps' request.

From Winston Churchill came a characteristic reply.

"12th March, 1937

"DEAR CRIPPS,

"I cannot feel that right of free speech is directly involved in the inability of a particular person to procure a particular hall. I do not therefore feel myself impelled to come to your assistance. You are, unless I am misinformed, working in political association with the Communists at the present time. And it has always been their rule, whenever they have the power, forcibly to suppress all opinions but their own. This also would make the case you mention by no means a good occasion on which to make a protest to the Public. Most people will think that the Communists have a pretty good run over here, certainly much better than they are given by the German Nazis, by whom, if I remember rightly, you declared it would be a good thing if we were conquered. Excuse my frankness in dealing with the points you raise

"Yours sincerely,

"WINSTON S. CHURCHILL."

Cripps retorted on March 13th, 1937:

"Thank you for your letter of the 12th of March. You are quite right that I am working in political association with the Communists at the present time in order, not to obtain power for the Communists, but in order to obtain power for the Labour Party, who like myself have always expressed the view that freedom of speech is essential to Democracy, even to the extent of supporting your belief that you should be allowed to use the broadcasting.

"I do not appreciate your reference to the Communists being allowed a pretty good run over here. They are as entitled in a Democratic country to a good run and the use of a recognised Public Hall as are the Fascists, yourself or Mr Baldwin.

"If you will take the trouble to refer to the press and the correction which I issued as regards my Stockport speech to which you refer, you will see that you are misquoting me.

"I am delighted at your frankness because it shows as I suspected that you are keener on downing the Communist than on supporting freedom of speech.

"I shall probably be sending to the press the whole of the correspondence with respect to the Albert Hall."

Down came the Labour Party Executive upon the Socialist League, and on March 24th it declared that membership of the Socialist League was incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. This was a clever tactical move on the part of the Executive. The members of the Socialist League had now to choose between continued membership of the Labour Party or becoming a new dissident and ineffective group outside the Labour Party. They chose to remain in the Labour Party and dissolved the Socialist League. That ended part one of the Labour Party's suppression of the "United Front" campaign.

Sir Stafford and his colleagues had now to make up their minds on how to continue the struggle. Should they continue as individual members of the Labour Party publicly to campaign as before and risk personal expulsion? This they decided to do. One thing the Executive of the Party could not escape was the fact that Sir Stafford had established himself in his own right as a Socialist leader of renown and undeniable ability. Right in the middle of the "United Front" campaign, when they were most anxious to dissociate themselves from him, the Parliamentary Labour Party were compelled to ask Cripps to lead the debate in the House of Commons on the Report of the Royal Commission on the Gresford Mining Disaster.<sup>1</sup> To whom else could they have made the request who would not have been completely eclipsed the moment Sir Stafford should rise to speak? The leader of the Party had no option but to ask Sir Stafford, the back-bencher, to lead for the Party in that debate. And of course he did so.

A few weeks later the Labour Party Executive decided to squash the "United Front" campaign. They announced that any member of the Labour Party who appeared on the public

platform with any member of the Independent Labour Party or the Communist Party would be expelled automatically. What had Stafford and his friends to say to that challenge? Some of the leaders of the Labour Party were hoping that they would promptly jump for expulsion. But not so Herbert Morrison, who, anxious to keep the leader he had brought into the Party, wrote to Stafford a long letter in which he said

"No one has regretted more than I the difficulties which have risen between yourself and the Party. You may remember that I was among the first, if not the first, to urge you to join the Labour Party, way back in the days when we ran across each other in the proceedings of the Railway Rates Tribunal . . .

"I do not believe that there has been any desire to prevent your playing a full part in the great work of the Party, I do not need to assure you that there is no such desire so far as I am concerned. But I should be less than honest if I did not say that there is, I think, a responsibility on you to make your contribution to a rapprochement, and that many of your public statements and activities have been a source of embarrassment to the Party and hardly conducive to that Labour Party unity which is so essential to the success of our work. An unfortunate result has been, I think, that what might have been a valuable and desirable influence from your point of view has been weakened within the ranks . . .

"Forgive me for writing this plainly, but I have a high personal regard for you and I am terribly anxious that it may be possible for you and others so to reshape your political future work that you may play that bigger and closer part in the work of the Party that I would desire . . ."

Cripps replied, gratified at Morrison's friendliness:

"Very many thanks for your letter, which I was glad to get and the contents of which interested me very much.

"I think we might have a talk some time when you can spare a moment from your busy life. Perhaps we could dine somewhere one night out of the House of Commons . . ."

But nothing came of that. The campaigners for the "United Front of the Working Class" decided to refer the matter to the 1937 Annual Conference of the Labour Party, which was near at hand. Again, Stafford led the fight on this issue and, as hitherto, it was overwhelmingly defeated. That ended the first "unity" fight. But a surprising thing happened at the conference. Structural changes were made in the Labour Party by this



conference which gave the local Labour Parties the right to elect a specified number of their own nominees to the Executive of the Party. The day following the defeat of the "United Front" proposals, Stafford Cripps was again elected to the Labour Party Executive as a nominee of the local Labour Parties, along with D. N. Pritt and Harold Laski, both of whom had expressed their sympathy with the Unity campaign.

As soon as the conference was ended, Sir Stafford, again on the front bench in the House of Commons, was in the forefront of the attack on the "National" Government. Early in 1938 the "Non-Intervention" supporters brought in a new measure for the "withdrawal of volunteers from Spain" and Sir Stafford made one of his most savage onslaughts on the Government. In the House of Commons he said:

"Whenever any restraint has been put nominally on both sides it has been effective against the Government of Spain but never effective against the Rebels . . . They decide to stop munitions, but they stop them for the Government and not for Franco. They decide to stop volunteers, but they stop them for the Government and not for Franco.

This plan of the moment is the plan to give the greatest help to General Franco and be the most damaging to the Spanish Government.

. . . We are not ashamed to say that we urgently desire the Spanish Government to be victorious. It is only the other side who are ashamed to say, what is a fact, that they anxiously desire to see the victory of General Franco."

Despite all protests the Bill went through, and one December night it was Sir Stafford's fate, along with Clement Attlee, to meet a train in Victoria Station, London, bearing 300 British members of the International Brigade, withdrawn from Spain. The words of welcome and greetings from Attlee and Cripps testified to these men as the first Britishers to fight the war of liberation against Hitler and Mussolini on foreign soil. A sad momentary ending to a great adventure.

Then there was a short holiday lull during which the Cripps' visited Jamaica, but by the middle of 1938 the next stages in the drama of Europe began to become most decisive.

Czechoslovakia was about to be first carved up and then handed over *completely* to Hitler, with Britain violating her treaty obligations and completely abandoning every principle upon which the League of Nations and its Covenant had been founded. The last pillars of the League were crumbling to bits and the old

"Peace System" which had risen from the ashes of the First World War soon would be no more.

Mr. Chamberlain flew to Berchtesgaden and there agreed to Hitler's proposal for the ceding to Germany of the Sudetenland by Czechoslovakia. Then Hitler demanded all Czechoslovakia in which there were fifty per cent of German-speaking people. Again Mr. Chamberlain flew in an aeroplane, this time to Godesburg. He returned in a state of alarm and told the people to get their gas-masks. On September 30th he and the French Premier, Daladier, signed the Munich Pact without consulting either the Governments of Czechoslovakia or of Soviet Russia. He hailed the event as a triumph and declared that we had now "Peace in our time."

Sir Stafford arrived home from Jamaica in time for the House of Commons meeting on October 5th when the Munich Pact was debated. He rose to speak for Labour. Never had he been so deeply stirred by the turn of events. Following the Government spokesmen he accused them of conscious dishonesty and cynical indecency. He said:

"All the time they have been afraid to expose their true policy to the people of this country, because they know that the people would not accept it, as Lord Baldwin, in the appallingly frank speech which he made after the last election, admitted to the House. They have spoken of collective security and of the Covenant of the League of Nations, but have never believed in the efficacy of either of them. . . .

". . . They have uniformly failed, and purposely failed, to give that lead for strengthening these organisations of peace which might have given real effect to them as implements for securing the salvation of this country and other democratic countries . . ."

After this critical onslaught on the Government, a new note appears in his speeches which seems to indicate that since his visit to Jamaica and the events at Munich, some great change had taken place in his orientation to the whole situation. He continued:

"What is required for a sound foreign policy are two things. First of all, the strength to maintain the rule of law internationally, and secondly, and no less important, the courage to initiate a complete reorganisation of the international economic life of the nation, even, I add, at the price of sacrificing some of our imperial interests, if need be. I do not and never would suggest the handing over of any Imperial possessions of this country to any other Imperialist nation . . .

"Maybe to-day we have staved off war by the sacrifice of other people's national interests. That is a comparatively easy way of buying peace

Never has this Government been prepared to throw into the pool of international co-operation vital British interests or possessions in any part of the world. As long as policy is based on the conception of what Britain has Britain holds, there will be no solution possible of the economic problem of the world, a problem which lies at the very root of the grave dangers of the last few days.

"You will not forever satisfy rival imperialisms by handing over to them the smaller nations of the world. The time will come when the clash will be at your own door. Sweet reasonableness which consists in giving away the property of others and building up huge armaments to protect what is your own will never resolve the problem of peace, yet such is the policy of His Majesty's Government to-day. From such a policy we dissent with all our power."

Since the time when he helped to launch the Socialist League he had pursued a policy based clearly and firmly upon the need for *working-class unity* in a *class fight* against the *ruling class of Britain*. On all international questions he had taken his stand upon the principle of fighting the *class enemy* in *one's own country*. In this period he had been as tenacious as the Labour Party Executive in refusing to have political association with Liberals and Tories, refused indeed, any semblance of alliance with other than working-class parties.

Now, the duplicity and utter incompetence of the Government, led by Chamberlain, had created so ominous a situation he was convinced that at all costs the people of Britain must force the resignation of the Government and replace it with an anti-Fascist coalition or Popular Front Government. To secure such a change he determined to throw his energy into the support of the agitation already started for the setting-up of a "People's Front". An election was due at the end of 1939. It was obvious to any observer that if an immediate election were to be held the Labour Party could not on its own account secure a majority. The Conservatives would be returned unless there was unity of action between all the opponents of the Government, three-corner fights avoided, and a general concentration of democratic forces against the Conservatives.

Already there was a widespread movement favouring this course. In 1936 Murphy had resigned on this issue from his post as General Secretary of the Socialist League and in 1937 he launched a People's Front Campaign. The Communist Party was conducting a similar campaign, except that it made a *condition of such popular unity* that there should exist the *United*

*Front of the Working Class*, on the lines of the earlier working-class Unity campaign which had led to the dissolution of the Socialist League

Sir Stafford was a member of the Executive of the Labour Party. How then should he act? On January 9th, 1939, he sent to the National Secretary of the Party what was shortly to become famous as the "Cripps Memorandum". In this he declared

"If the Labour Party were to come out boldly as the leader of a combined opposition to the National Government, such a step would, I am sure, enormously increase its prestige and popularity in the country."

The Popular Front should be formed by

"The Party issuing a manifesto inviting the co-operation of every genuine anti-Government Party or group of individuals who would be prepared to give support to:

"(1) The effective protection of the democratic rights, liberties and freedom of the British people, from internal and external attack

"(2) A positive policy of peace by collective action with France, Russia, the United States of America and other democratic countries for the strengthening of democracy against aggression and a world economic reconstruction based upon justice to the people of all classes and nations."

The remaining proposals of social reforms were items contained in Labour's programme and common to the Liberal Party's programme.

Stafford's letter to J. M. Middleton, the Secretary of the Party, and the Memorandum, came before the Executive of the Labour Party. The discussion was most revealing. Mr. Attlee said in effect:

"We can't run counter to Conference. I am doubtful about the feeling in the country. The proposals are wrong in their conception of the sort of Government that could act. Only a positive Socialist programme could get us through. You can't oppose the Government all out and unite all anti-Government forces. People are more likely to be attracted by a clear-cut programme of Socialism."

Of the international situation Attlee had not a word to say. Mr. James Walker, the leader of the Steel Smelters' Union, wanted to know what all the fuss was about. He thought Chamberlain had done good work at Munich and Cripps was

still in his political childhood. Herbert Morrison did not think the Popular Front proposals were practicable. Mr Dalton accused Stafford of making personal popularity out of his opposition to the Executive. And so the discussion proceeded as if the political situation was that of the year 1900, or any other year far removed from the imminence of war. In the outcome, the Memorandum was rejected by seventeen votes to three. The three in favour were Ellen Wilkinson, D. N. Pritt and Cripps himself.

He had the satisfaction of knowing that the Memorandum had the approval of his father. Parmoor had written him on January 17th.

"MY VERY DEAR STAFF,

"I have read with great interest your memorandum submitted to Middleton, with your letter stating clearly your views on the present political outlook. I may say at once that I am in close general agreement with your statement as expressed in the memorandum and the letter

"Your affectionate father,

"PARMOOR"

And now, what next? Once again he was in conflict with the Party machine. Had Sir Stafford accepted that defeat as final, nothing more would have been heard of it. But he regarded the situation as too serious to permit matters to rest there.

He claimed the right to issue his document to all Labour organisations and to get it before the Conference of the Labour Party. He issued it to the Press and made sure the world should know his views on the urgency of the times. That meant, to the Executive, he had again begun the organisation of a rival centre of leadership. They determined to put an end to the matter.

Another meeting of the Executive was called on January 25th, at which was presented a lengthy counter-memorandum, which listed all his misdemeanours and "irresponsible speeches of the last seven years." They accused him of what appeared to be the crime of crimes. He "had publicly indicated his view that the Labour Party is incapable of returning a Government by itself," which, of course, at that time it could not. He was asked to withdraw his Memorandum, "by circular to the persons and organisations to whom it was addressed."

He refused, and was promptly expelled from the Party. So at last Labour Party Headquarters could breathe freely and hotly. The most disconcerting leader they had ever known in their ranks was out of the Party if not out of the way.

Instead of this precipitate action of the Labour Party Executive bringing the dispute to an end it succeeded in creating a national sensation. The newspaper headlines of that day told the world that "Cripps was out". The Press was in high glee and newspapers which had belaboured him in and out of season now declared that he was far and away the most able man the Party possessed. Indeed, one newspaper talked of the Labour Party "blowing its brains out".

Sir Stafford did not let the grass grow under his feet. He was not to be disposed of easily. He was still a Member of Parliament. He had the full support of the East Bristol Labour Party and the backing of his constituents who had elected him to Parliament. After consultation with some friends, he decided to launch a Petition which would be the basis for his "People's Front" campaign. It was a direct appeal to the people of Britain to support his views and asking the Labour Party rank and file to insist that the forthcoming Labour Party Conference reverse the decision of the Executive. The Petition said:

"We British Citizens, looking out on a world threatened as never before by War and Fascism, call upon the parties of Progress to act together and at once for the sake of peace and civilisation

"We ask for a Government that will:

"(1) Defend Democracy, protect our democratic rights and liberties against attack at home and from abroad;

"(2) Plan for Plenty, multiply the wealth of the nation by employing the unemployed on useful work; increase Old Age Pensions; ensure a higher standard of life; educational leisure for old and young;

"(3) Secure our Britain, organise a Peace Alliance with France and Russia, that will rally the support of the United States and every other peace-loving nation and end the shameful policy which made us accomplices in the betrayal of the Spanish and Chinese people to Fascist aggression,

"(4) Protect the People's interest, control armaments and the vital industries, agriculture, transport, mining and finance;

"(5) Defend the People, provide effective protection against air attack and starvation in the event of war;

"(6) Build for peace and Justice, end the exploitation of subject races and lay the foundations of a lasting peace through equality of opportunity for all nations

"In the face of the perils that confront us, we urge you to combine

every effort to drive the National Government from office and win for us the Six Points of our Petition To a Government of your united forces we pledge our whole-hearted support ”

Strange things happened at once Ellen Wilkinson and D. N. Pritt, having supported Cripps in the Executive and voted for his Memorandum, declined to go further Three Labour M P s rallied at once to Sir Stafford and joined with him in a central committee for launching the Petition They were C. C. Poole, Aneurin Bevan and G. R. Strauss Will Lawther, leader of the Mine Workers' Federation, Sir Charles Trevelyan, H. N. Brailsford, and other ex-Executive leaders of the Socialist League joined in the fray Petition committees were formed in all parts of the country.

John Maynard Keynes, later Lord Keynes, wrote:

“Feb 9th, 1939

“MY DEAR CRIPPS,

“I am in full sympathy with what you are doing It seems to me very important not to split existing Parties but to capture them I had a talk yesterday with Violet Bonham-Carter and agreed to sign the petition of which she had a copy, though I made some suggestions about some additional words to it

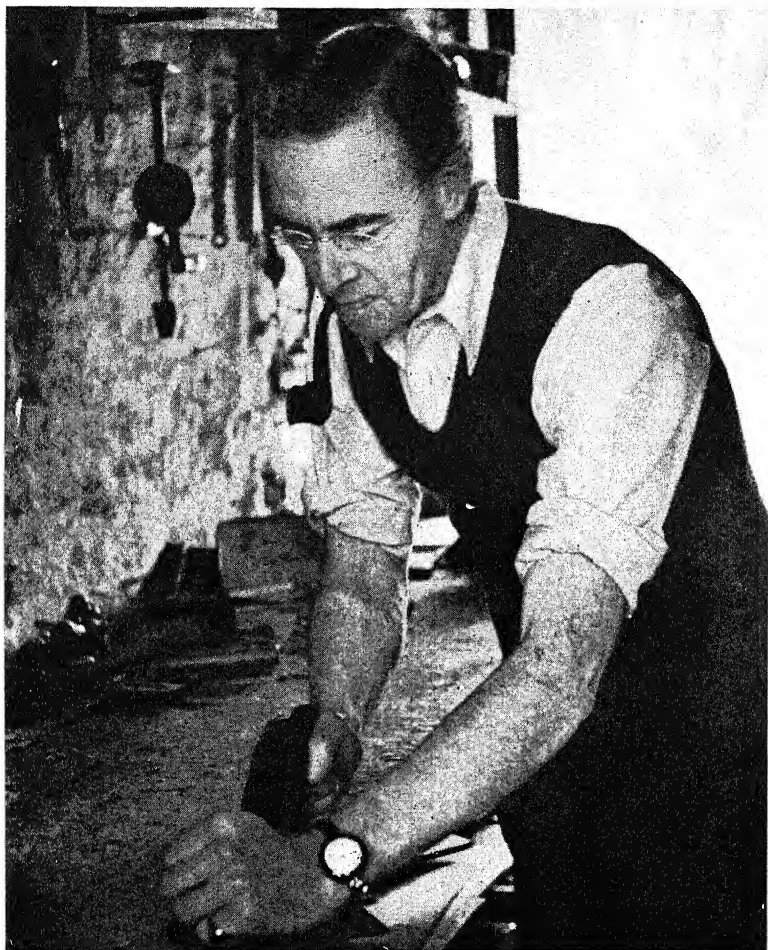
“Yours sincerely,

“J. M. KEYNES.”

And G. B. Shaw, as young as ever, crashed into the *Daily Herald* with characteristic verve:

“Sir Stafford Cripps proposed a Holy Alliance to get rid of the present Government as Napoleon was got rid of at Waterloo, by a mixed force of British, Belgians and Prussians under an Irish General If a Labour Member may not propose this he may not propose anything. But the Labour Party Executive, taking a leaf out of Herr Hitler's book, promptly expels Sir Stafford, who, whether right or wrong, will presently wipe the floor with it for being so silly ”

Fast and furious went the battle The Labour Party Executive now claimed to be the custodians of Socialism in all its purity. It asserted that association with other parties in a People's Government would mean “the surrender of Socialism”, “the abandonment of Socialism”. But what annoyed Transport House most was that in this campaign Sir Stafford proved to be the biggest recruiting agent the Party had had in many years. Thousands joined the Labour Party at the Petition meetings which he addressed. And so the storm raged.



IN HIS CARPENTRY SHOP AT GOODFELLOWS

*(Photo: Picture Post)*





WITH RYELAND RAM



LEADING HIS RYELAND SHEEP



STAFFORD AND ISOBEL, 1939

*(Photo Daily Herald)*



STAFFORD AT URUMCHI, CHINA, 1940, WITH GEOFFREY WILSON

The Labour Party threatened further expulsions and with that crack of the whip Mr Poole, M P, and Will Lawther, the Miners' leader, retreated. Ellen Wilkinson resigned from the Editorial Board of the *Tribune*, which was backing the campaign. An ultimatum was issued to Aneurin Bevan, M P, G. R. Strauss, Mr. Robert Bruce to cease support of the campaign or be expelled. They were expelled. H. N. Brailsford wrote to the Executive and told them to expel him, too, as he was with Sir Stafford in this fight.

The fight was waged with great bitterness. Ridley, an Executive member of the Party, wrote

"By accident of birth, and a privileged capacity to earn a fabulous income, a privately controlled political machine is being created that gravely menaces the authority of the Party "

Herbert Morrison talked of Sir Stafford possessing "an indelicate manifestation of egotism". There appeared to be no limits to the innuendoes. D. N. Pritt brought to his notice another feature of the campaign against him. Writing on March 3rd, 1939, he said.

"DEAR STAFFORD,

"Whether it is part of a whispering campaign emanating from Transport House or just independent malice, there is a story being sent around about you to the effect that the men you employ at Filkins are (a) not members of a Trade Union, and (b) not being paid Trade Union wages. I have actually got one case where I can fasten on a definite individual who has spread this story and put a stop to him. Could you tell me the facts when you have a moment to spare?

"Yrs ever,

"D. N. PRITT "

Stafford gave the facts. He wrote in reply on March 7th, 1939:

"MY DEAR JOHNNY,

"Many thanks for your letter about the men employed at Filkins. The facts are as follows.

- (a) After a struggle of some years against the apathy of the Trade Unions, I managed to get a branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union started in the village, and I have since made Trade Unionism compulsory so far as any of my jobs are concerned

- (b) It is therefore obvious that anyone employed by me is paid Trade Union rates of wages. They also get a holiday with pay.

"If you have any cases of absolute libels of this kind, you might let me know, as they are interesting.

"Yrs ever,

"STAFFORD "

Stafford toured the country from end to end. Scores of Petition committees were set up to support him. The meetings everywhere were large and enthusiastic but they did not influence the mass of the Trade Unions who would decide the issue.

When the time came for holding the annual meeting of the Labour Party at Southport, Sir Stafford asked to face the conference. The great gathering presented a strange scene. The question which dominated the conference was the position of Sir Stafford and the other expelled members. There they sat in the public gallery, Sir Stafford and Lady Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, the stormy petrel of the Party, George Strauss, Lt-Commander Young. They waited to learn if the conference would permit standing orders to be suspended so that Sir Stafford could be heard. Bevan's Union voted against this move, and had not the Mineworkers' Federation voted in favour the proposal would have been overwhelmingly defeated. They gave Sir Stafford twenty minutes. As his erect figure walked quietly to the rostrum the great gathering broke into storms of applause and booing. Quietly he waited and then, speaking as if he were addressing a court of judges, he stated his case and limited it to a justification of his course of action by constitutional procedure, claiming the right of every member of a party not only to state his views, but to take whatever measures he may deem necessary to organise support for them. Of the political issues of the Petition he said nothing, these being before the conference in a further debate, on the Popular Front. It was of no avail. The Unions had decided how they were going to vote long before they had heard what Sir Stafford had to say. The Executive's act of expulsion was endorsed by 2,100,000 votes to 402,000.

A similar vote also sealed the fate of the "People's Front" resolution.

So Stafford Cripps had become, by the actions of the Labour Party, an Independent Labour M.P. for East Bristol, a back-

bencher without a Party. It was a strange position for him to be in and not without its touch of irony. All of Cripps' opposition to the Labour Party Executive up to the Munich crisis had been based upon *class struggle* principles which the Labour Party rejected. After the signing of the Munich Pact he proceeded to abandon class struggle principles in favour of the national principles of the Labour Party. The difference between Sir Stafford and the Labour Party was not now a difference of principle but one rather of application of principles which they held in common. And this had led to his expulsion! The Labour Party wished to organise the support of *all people irrespective of class* who accepted their programme. Stafford wanted this, too, but went further in that he wished the Labour Party to unite with *other parties irrespective of class* against the Government of the day, in order to more effectively fight galloping Fascism.

This was a significant turning point in Stafford's career. From this time onwards he leaves behind him the *class struggle* principles to resume the course he had been taking before the crisis of 1931, albeit in very different circumstances. He was then in full accord with the Cripps-Potter tradition, working in harmony with Parmoor, the Webbs and their theory of the progressive organic development of society without abrupt breaks. The events of 1931 shocked him, as they did the whole Labour Movement, from this mode of thought. All society was torn apart into rival class camps, the Labour Movement in one and the old parties of Liberalism and Toryism in the other. Cripps went with the Labour Party and promptly rationalised the situation in accordance with the logic of that division. This led him to the "extravagant criticisms" of Palace politics, the institutions of Government and rival parties although at no time did he become a republican or a non-constitutionalist.

All that was behind him after the Munich Pact period, for the new crisis did not lend itself to the same simple alignment of forces. Now all classes were involved as was the very existence of the institutions which he had previously criticised: "Monarchy," "Parliament," "Democracy." Nation was about to fight nation. All his native, traditional patriotism demanded of him that he follow the logic of these circumstances as fearlessly as he had followed the other. Hence, the claims of the "nation" began to supersede the claims of any class. Thus, once again, he moved into the main stream of the course pursued by his forebears.

War was coming nearer and nearer.

## THE INDEPENDENT

WHEN Sir Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, G. R. Strauss and the others who had been expelled by the Labour Party met on the day following their expulsion, all agreed to apply at once for re-admission to the Party. By return of post came a most amazing and revealing reply which said that the applications could not be considered for some time because, in view of the gravity of the international situation, no meeting of the National Executive would be held during the summer, a strange decision in view of the seriousness of the circumstances. The gravity of the situation will be appreciated—the date was June 2nd, 1939.

The conference at Southport had passed a resolution in which it expressed "its deep concern at the prolonged delay in concluding a definite and unequivocal pact with France and the Soviet Union for mutual defence", condemned the "shameful record of the so-called 'National' Government", advised it of the principles it should adopt, and adjourned. It rejected every proposal for forcing, or attempting to force, the Chamberlain Government to resign, content to wait for an expected General Election some time before the year's end.

Murphy, speaking in the "Popular Front" debate, summed up the situation before the conference in these words.

"The immediate choice before the people in this Party is not that of Capitalism versus Socialism—it is to-day a choice between the continued existence of the pro-Fascist Chamberlain Government and the advance towards Socialism through the preservation of Democracy, of peace and of our liberty. It is an amazing thing that on every question apart from that of fighting the Chamberlain Government, the Party declares this to be the case. It does not say on international affairs the immediate issue is that of World Capitalism versus World Socialism and that we will have nothing to do with Governments and authorities abroad who are non-socialist. Yet when it comes to facing the issue of the struggle against the pro-Fascist Chamberlain Government which it denounces, and which the opposition parties named in this resolution denounce with

equal vigour, our Party refuses to lead a united struggle for Democracy and Peace. The path which this party is taking leads straight into the Chamberlain Government instead of to Socialism."

The overwhelming defeat of Cripps and his colleagues in the conference ruled out all consideration of a campaign for re-admission to the Labour Party. Fortunately, expulsion from the Labour Party did not carry with it expulsion from Parliament. Cripps knew also that he had the full support both of the Bristol East Labour Party and the people of East Bristol who had elected him to Parliament. Neither he nor Aneurin Bevan and George Strauss, the other expelled M.P.s, gave a moment's consideration to the formation of a new party. That, they knew, would only have obscured instead of clarifying the main issues before the people.

Stafford had to think quickly. Suddenly it dawned on him that what he could not do as a leading member of the Labour Party he could do as an individual. He would speak in Parliament and out of it, as an independent Socialist! Unable to organise a Popular Front to fight Chamberlain and the "Men of Munich", he would use every personal contact he possessed among the supporters of Chamberlain to disintegrate their support. He was convinced that immediately war embroiled Britain there would have to be a "Government of concentration"—a coalition which would include the Labour Party. He would therefore aim to make it impossible for Chamberlain and the other "Men of Munich" to be the leaders of such a Government.

It is here necessary to recall the outstanding developments of the months prior to Britain's declaration of war on Germany. On April 14th, 1939, after Britain's unilateral guarantees had been given to Poland and Roumania, Russia was asked to give similar guarantees to these two countries. On the 17th of April, Russia replied by proposing a triple pact of mutual assistance between France, Great Britain and Russia, a military convention reinforcing such a pact, and a triple guarantee of all the Border States from the Baltic to the Black Sea. J. Wheeler-Bennett, in *Munich: Prologue to Tragedy*, says of this proposal:

"The Russian reply was starkly realistic. It faced Britain and France with the quandary of whether, in their opposition to German aggression, they were prepared to become full partners in an alliance with the Soviet Union—and all that implied. Moreover, in demanding a guarantee for all the Border States, the Soviet Government had touched on a point of political and strategic importance. The Baltic lands represented to



Germany a Naboth's vineyard, and to Russia a terra irredenta. Ceded by Russia and annexed by Germany after the peace of Brest-Litovsk, they had later achieved and preserved an uneasy independence. But neither the German nor the Russian General Staffs had forgotten Marshal von Hindenburg's famous reply to Baron von Kuhlmann when, on the eve of his departure for the Brest-Litovsk Conference in December 1917, the German Foreign Minister had asked why the Field-Marshal was so particularly wanting the eastern border States for Germany—"I need them," Hindenburg had replied in his deep growling voice, "I need them for the manœuvring of my left wing in the next war."

But the British and the French were afraid of the implications of the proposed alliance, and, as *The Times* put it, on May 3rd, 1939, thought that "a hard and fast alliance with Russia might hamper other negotiations and approaches". In other words, it would rule out a continuation of the Munich policy. So on May 1st, Mr. Chamberlain declined the Russian proposal. But on May 9th, he repeated his proposal of April 14th for a unilateral guarantee for Poland and Roumania, with the novel suggestion that the guarantee should become operative only upon the decision of the British Government, without making the slightest mention of any reciprocal assistance to be accorded Russia by Britain and France. On May 14th, Russia replied by repeating her original proposals and ignoring the British Government's stupidity. But the Soviet Government had noticed the character of the British proposals. Indeed, they regarded the proposals as one more attempt on the part of the Chamberlain Government to turn Hitler's face towards the East, without Britain and France being under any obligation to line up with Russia. When, on May 27th, the British Government, under pressure from the Labour and Liberal Parties and many Conservatives, notified the Soviet Government of the preparedness of the British Government to negotiate a pact, Count von Schulenburg from Germany was already in Moscow to negotiate a trade agreement. Should it happen that once again the British and the French proved to be playing for time, rather than really coming to equitable terms of common defence against the Fascist powers, the door was thus wide open for the Soviet Government to step aside and defend the Soviet Union by other means.

Mr. Wheeler-Bennett states in *Munich* that on June 2nd, the day the Labour Party Conference ended, the Soviet Government made further proposals that:

"In addition to the conclusion of a triple alliance, there should be an agreement for the U S S R. to give assistance to five out of the seven States which had been guaranteed by Britain and France, (Belgium, Greece, Roumania, Poland and Turkey); a further pact whereby the Three Powers should assist the Baltic States should their neutrality be violated, and a concrete agreement about the methods, form and extent of the help to be given "

Lord Halifax himself, was invited to come to Moscow and negotiate the pact

On June 8th, Lord Halifax made a speech in the House of Lords expressing his "distaste" for the division of Europe into politically hostile groups and offered to Germany the idea of a conference for the "adjustment of rival claims". This appeared to the Russians to be writing-off their proposals as of no account. Nevertheless, they waited for the British and French delegation, which arrived in Moscow on June 15th. Conversations proceeded without arriving at any decisions, until a member of the Russian delegation wrote an article in *Pravda* of June 29th, telling the world it was his opinion that "the British and French Governments are not out for a real agreement acceptable to the U S S R. but only for talks about an agreement whilst facilitating the conclusion of an agreement with the aggressors".

To the Russians, this appeared to be the fact. For according to Mr. Wheeler-Bennett, "on July 18th, Doctor Wohltat, a leading German economic expert and chief assistant on Goering's planning staff, arrived in London to be received by Mr Robert Hudson, Parliamentary Secretary of the Overseas Trade Department, and by officials of the Treasury. As a result of these conferences, the press of the world rang with talk of economic appeasement, and of a possible loan to Germany of £500,000,000 . . ." The effect upon the Soviet leaders can well be imagined as they remembered the presence of Count von Schulenburg on the doorstep of their own Foreign Trade Department.

But by July 25th it was agreed that staff talks should begin. The Joint Staff Mission of the British and the French Governments left London on August 5th, travelled by slow boat, and arrived in Moscow on August 11th.

These were the "high-spots" of world war development, from the time of the Labour Party's expulsion of Stafford Cripps to the end of his first efforts to undermine the position of Chamberlain and change the Government by personal persuasion.

Stafford's diary records that his first step in his new offensive was to write to Baldwin arranging a meeting with him on June 19th. Of this meeting Stafford said

"We had a long conversation . . . I gained the impression that I could not expect anything from him in the way of action, though his political sense and observation were obviously acute. However, he promised to consider all I had said and to see whether he could do anything . . ."

On June 22nd Stafford Cripps conferred with Winston Churchill at his flat. Churchill inveighed strongly against the Prime Minister and told how he and Eden in particular had been ready to join the Cabinet ever since Hitler had entered Prague. But Chamberlain would not have them because their entrance into the Government would have put an end to his policy of appeasement. Indeed he expressed the view that had not Chamberlain appeared to have changed his policy after Hitler's march into Prague the movement for a Popular Front would have swept the country and he would have supported it. He certainly agreed that an all-in Government was necessary but despaired of convincing Chamberlain and could not see how to get rid of him.

"On Friday, June 23rd," says Cripps, "I sent Kingsley Wood a draft of the sort of speech I should have liked to make over the wireless to the German people—including a strong repudiation of imperialism and the acceptance of international co-operation as the new basis of world development. I suggested if Halifax would like to see me I would gladly go to see him. I had an immediate response that the letter had gone to Halifax, and he would be glad to see me."

On the 28th, he writes:

"I fixed an appointment for 4.30 p.m. at the House of Lords. I found Lord Perth there and discovered that Halifax had discussed my memorandum with Ogilvie (BBC) beforehand. I developed the scheme for broadcasting on a much wider basis of a really strong and broad attack. I had discussed the matter with David Astor who had been working on the broadcasts. . . . During the discussion, I had the opportunity of raising the second point as to an all-in Government. . . . Halifax agreed that it was the right policy. . . . The same evening at 10.15 p.m. I had an hour with Oliver Stanley, and completely convinced him of the urgent need of an all-in Government. I told him who I had already seen and begged him to start doing something. . . . Before I

left he promised he would discuss it at once with others and see what, if anything, could be done . . .”

On June 29th, Stafford wrote:

“I arranged a lunch at which three Trade Unionists, Ben Smith, Jim Griffiths, Will Dobbie, should meet Colonel Count Schwerin of the German General Staff in order to impress on the German Colonel that the British working class was really serious in its attitude. I dined with Aneurin Bevan and was glad to find his reactions the same as mine . . .”

Cripps had now got the idea going in many quarters that an all-in Government was essential, but he says.

“The difficulty is to replace the Prime Minister to make it at all possible. This can only now be done by intrigue from within the Cabinet itself. It remains to be seen what will eventuate from that. If nothing occurs within the next week, I shall consider launching a press campaign to try and bring the result about—as the situation is so desperate that something must be done. I have been appalled in these and other conversations to feel the hopeless bankruptcy of ideas and initiative in the highest quarters. There seems to be just a hopeless resignation to the inevitable disaster . . .”

On June 30th, the day after the Zhdanov article appeared in *Pravda*, he, now anxious above everything to get a pact between Britain and Russia signed, wrote in his diary

“I rang up Kingsley Wood and offered my services to go at once to Moscow to get the Russian agreement concluded, as I felt I could do this if I was given the authority . . .”

On July 3rd Lord Halifax thanked him for the offer but could not make use of his services. He learned the next day that negotiations with the Soviet Union had reached the stage of qualified acceptance by the U S S R subject to three points: (1) that aggression should include direct and indirect; (2) military talks should follow at once on the signing of the pact; (3) at the last moment Britain had raised the question of including three new countries, Holland, Switzerland and Luxembourg. Soviet Russia could not agree on the third proposition without further consideration. The third proposal appeared to Stafford sadly like sabotage. Anxiously he went to the House of Commons in search of Ministers to beg them to take action on the matter. But it was a Scottish night and none of the Ministers could be found. He even wrote to Winston Churchill urging him

to make a public statement offering his services But Churchill replied on July 8th, 1939, from his home at Westerham, Kent

"Many thanks for your most kind letter which I have carefully weighed

"I am sure that any such *démarche* on my part would be unwise and weaken me in any discussion I might have to have with the gentleman in question

"Many thanks for writing."

This reply and the "Hudson" disclosures made things appear hopeless.

Coming to the conclusion that there was nothing more he could do at the moment, and Parliament having risen for the summer recess, Cripps returned to "Goodfellows". Ever since 1920, when Stafford and Isobel first occupied "Goodfellows" with their three young children, John, Diana and Theresa, and where Margaret, their fourth child, was born in 1921, "Goodfellows" had been the treasured home to which Stafford returned as frequently as possible. Here he drew strength and confidence in his life with Isobel and his children; here, during the 'twenties, he returned from his legal battles; here, exactly a decade before, he had decided to embark on his political career, after lengthy discussions with Isobel during which they recognised "that life would never be the same." The 'thirties, as Stafford became increasingly involved in the legal and political world, cut a mighty swathe into the time for domestic life which he could spend at "Goodfellows". But the life of "Goodfellows" went on under Isobel's direction, the house reverberated to the noise of growing children, school and university friends; an atmosphere developed reminiscent of Robert Frost's "Master of the Inn". Of life at "Goodfellows", Geoffrey Wilson, an undergraduate friend of John's whilst he was at Oxford who later became a close family friend and professional associate, writes:

"Stafford used to get to 'Goodfellows' on Friday evenings in time for dinner after his day's work in the Courts, and leave again very early on Monday morning. But that was only during the summer. From October to April his week-ends were spent in addressing meetings throughout the country, and he rarely saw his peaceful and soul-restoring home. So week-ends at 'Goodfellows' really meant summer week-ends

"The beauty, the comfort and the sense of general well-being could be repeated in countless homes. It was the spirit of Stafford and Isobel which pervaded the whole place that made 'Goodfellows' different.

They were the life and soul of all that happened there. Several of their four children and two adopted sons were generally around.

"And there was Miss Hill, Stafford's secretary, and Miss Lawrence, universally known as Nannie. The guests, generally three or four at a time, were a miscellaneous lot—distinguished politicians and some less distinguished, youthful protégés, relatives, old friends of the family, and people that Isobel just thought would be all the better for a few days rest in the country. Among the politicians, George Lansbury and Jawaharlal Nehru stand out particularly in my memory, perhaps because their simple humanity and friendliness fitted so well into the general atmosphere.

"There was little routine. But you were expected to turn up in time for 8-30 breakfast unless you had a good excuse, to rest when you were told to, and to go to bed when Stafford announced that it was time, usually about 10-30. If you felt so inclined you could go for half an hour's walk—always the same walk—before breakfast with Stafford, accompanied by a selection of the family, three dogs and a goat. In the evening after dinner, you would sit in the library and talk at random about anything and everything while Stafford and the ladies of the family knitted jerseys for themselves and each other. When the weather was particularly good you would sit out of doors by the 'Moat', a stream that ran through the well-ordered garden.

"Otherwise the time was your own. You could go for walks or play tennis which was robust rather than expert, and read and talk in the library or garden. You could browse through the collection of special editions whose number grew steadily as each birthday passed. On Sunday you would probably be taken on a conducted tour of the village and shown the museum, the new cottages, the village centre, the swimming pool, the children's playground, and be introduced to George Swinford, the mason and foreman builder. At some stage you would find yourself engaged in a long talk with Isobel, which somehow always left you feeling more at peace with the world than you had been before. If you were lucky enough to strike a week-end when a birthday—your own or one of the family's—was being celebrated, you would be bundled into one of a fleet of cars and taken for an all day expedition with a picnic lunch to the Black Mountains. Or it might be a Shakespeare play at Stratford. If you felt so inclined you might go with the girls to see if there was anything to report from the fields where the earliest fritillaries or bee-orchids or anemone pulsatilla or some other wild flower was normally to be found. Or you could just mooch around and take life easy, turning up for meals at the appointed hour.

"I don't recollect any great preoccupation with 'problems', unless a group had been specially invited for the purpose. That was not the way

things worked. It was not that 'problems' were avoided, if the conversation happened to turn that way. But Stafford's life in London was busy and he usually had to spend a good deal of the week-end working. When he was not working he relaxed, and he relaxed as wholeheartedly as he worked. The result was a lot of leg-pulling and uproarious laughter, and a tendency to boisterousness at mealtimes which Isobel sometimes seemed to fear might get completely out of hand. We were not there to set the world to rights. Stafford and Isobel knew that they had created at 'Goodfellows' a place where not only they but all who came there, could draw inspiration from the peace and beauty and serenity which surrounded them. So those who had arrived from the city on Friday, jaded and careworn, would leave on Monday, loaded down with flowers that Isobel had plucked and spiritually refreshed to face the problems that awaited them in plenty in the world outside."

So once more, in this atmosphere of "Goodfellows", Stafford "talked things over" with Isobel. The children having attained their majorities, the home was no longer the tie which it had been when they were young. Isobel was now free to begin a new period of collaboration with Stafford in his political life. The responsibilities of this partnership were to be well shared between them. In a few short months the burden of representing Stafford in England would begin as he set out on his "round the world journey", followed almost immediately thereafter by his appointment as British Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

But that was to be for the future. The time was now July, 1939. Believing, incorrectly, that a pact would be duly signed between the Russians and Britain despite delays, the family packed their bags and departed for the south of France for what they thought, correctly, would be their last summer holiday abroad for a long time to come. Reflecting on the situation, Cripps wrote on July 27th:

"It seems as if Chamberlain might be going to the country in the autumn as the Saviour of the Peace by getting the Russian Pact and doing an appeasement with Germany, in which case the prospects of the Labour Party will be poor in the extreme, as they will really stand for nothing in particular. There may well be an electoral debacle if there is not a war before the year is out . . ."

But events did not take that course. On August 15th, Count von Schulenburg informed the Soviet Premier, Molotov, that Germany was prepared to negotiate a pact of non-aggression with Russia. The British-French Military Mission in Moscow

was without instructions. The Russians were convinced that nothing could come of continued conversations. The Poles refused to agree to the assistance of the Red Army, or to sign any agreement with Russia. On August 23rd the Soviet-Nazi Pact of Non-Aggression was signed, and the Soviet Union had secured eighteen months peace, a free hand to plan her defence in depth and to secure the regions on her frontier from "the manœuvring of Hitler's left wing in the next war". Hitler had secured his forces against a two-front war and was ready to turn westward immediately he had rubbed Poland off the map. And for that he was ready to strike immediately. He struck.

Stafford Cripps and his family had just returned to England when, on September 3rd, 1939, Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Germany.

There was no doubt in Stafford's mind as to what he should do. The question of "the use of force" had no relevance to his Christian conscience under these circumstances. All his family traditions, his centuries-rooted patriotism, and all his political convictions—which were integral with his Christian ethics, his whole nature as a man of action, combined to impel him forward as an active participant in the war against Nazism. There were no half measures to his commitment. He wound up all his personal affairs and placed his services at the disposal of the Government. This was not an application for membership of the Government, but an expression of his readiness to serve, in any capacity whatsoever, the purpose of war against Nazism. He was a scientist, lawyer, administrator, an ex-manager of the largest chemical factory in the war of 1914-18. But his services were not required!

Now he was in a unique situation. "purged" from the Labour Party, his services rejected by the Government, and the country at war! He was a back-bencher serving the Labour Movement which didn't wish to have his services, yet outshining its leaders every time he spoke in the House of Commons or on the public platform—a leader without an army! And yet if ever there was a man who could now afford to wait on events it was he.

But he could not passively "wait on events". Events of world significance were following each other at great speed and he was alarmed by the isolated position into which Britain had drifted. Fortunately Stafford did not lose his wits as so many of his old colleagues had done when the German-Soviet Pact was signed. He saw that whatever ultimate objective the Russians might have, it was of paramount importance for Britain that the Pact



of Non-Aggression should not be allowed, by default on Britain's part, to develop into a German-Soviet Military Alliance. The latter, he considered, could be avoided if, instead of sulking about the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, the British Government promptly set about establishing improved trade relations with Russia as the beginning of better political relations. The day before the Red Army had marched into Poland he wrote to Lord Halifax in furtherance of his idea and explained his views of the situation.

"September 16th, 1939

"Goodfellows,  
"Lechlade,  
"Glos

"DEAR LORD HALIFAX,

"I am so desperately worried by the development of the Russian situation that I am taking the liberty of writing to you and giving you my impressions on it for what they are worth

"You may remember that in the first note that I sent you through Kingsley Wood last July I stressed the possible danger of the German-Russian alliance if we were not more active in pursuing our own alliance with the U.S.S.R.

"This unfortunately for us has materialised and the policy of Russia in this matter is quite understandable from the point of the realpolitik that Russia has been pursuing ever since the dismissal of Litvinoff . . .

"The hostility of Poland to Russia largely due to the fear of Sovietisation has its reciprocal in the attitude of Russia to Poland which is now in evidence. This reaction on Russian opinion combined with the fear of Japan makes it natural that the Russians should look at the European scene with very different eyes to our own

"The Russian Government to-day has not the least sentimental attachment to the Western Democratic powers.

"They regard both the regime of the western Imperialisms of Great Britain and France as equally undesirable as the regime of Germany and as a consequence are prepared to take either side in the contest judging their position solely from the point of view of their own advantage . . .

"I think that the extent of the hostility that is thus developed towards this country in Russia is not yet finally determined and that it is possible yet for something to be done to allay the danger of our finding a new and very powerful enemy arrayed against us in company with Germany.

"It is not necessary to stress the extreme danger of such an eventuality. The question seems to me to be, can anything be done at this stage to prevent such a tragic development?

"Could not something be done at once on the line that was adopted during the last war for America when there was a dangerous development of anti-British feeling in that country? Or if that is not the appropriate technique in this case, could not all-party delegation fly to Moscow at once in order to try to influence Russian opinion in our direction?"

"I realise very fully that these are unusual steps to take but I regard the situation as so full of menace that it seems to me that no step, however unusual, should be neglected in the present circumstances, to prevent so serious a development of the situation to our most grave disadvantage and to our imminent danger.

"Yours very sincerely,

"R. STAFFORD CRIPPS "

He saw Winston Churchill, who at the outbreak of war became First Lord of the Admiralty. The only point of agreement between Cripps and Churchill on this occasion was the need to crush Nazism and to separate Russia from Germany. Although Churchill was still interested in discussing Government changes he was now praising Chamberlain. In all the comings and goings Cripps found Maisky, the Russian Ambassador in London, personally keen for better relations but emphasising that his Government were indifferent one way or the other. They would be ready to receive a trade delegation if Britain wanted to send one provided it was sufficiently influential. They would receive no more delegations headed by "office boys". At the same time he denied all possibility of Russia fighting with Germany. Stafford was not impressed with the denial. Nor did he rest content with agitating Ministers. He suggested the concrete ways and means to his end in a memorandum which he sent to Halifax.

*"Note on Russian Trade Talks.*

"I suggest that the best way in which to put the matter forward would be to propose that you should be authorised to start upon conversations with Maisky on the following basis to be laid down by you at the commencement of the negotiations

- (1) The negotiations to be concerned with the practical arrangements of the next twelve months' trading with Russia.
- (2) Negotiations to be carried on with Maisky in London in the first instance
- (3) A statement to be made by you at the beginning that if the following conditions mature in the course of the negotiations

then you will go to Moscow to conclude them, but that you are not prepared to give any kind of undertaking at this stage that you will go to Moscow

"The conditions to be as follows —

- (i) That a point is reached in the London negotiations when you are satisfied that there is enough substance in them to merit your going to Moscow
- (ii) That it appears necessary for you to go to Moscow on the ground that the negotiations cannot be finalised in this country
- (iii) That Maisky will give you his assurance and that of his Government that in a stay of not more than one week there is every chance of a final decision being come to

"As you know, I regard this offer to go to Moscow in certain events as of the very essence of success for the following reasons —

- (1) Russia is in the position of having a number of competitive customers for her exports of whom the most important from our point of view at the moment are Great Britain and Germany, in the sense that everything we can take will not only be to our advantage, but will also be to the detriment of Germany . In these circumstances Russia, having no great preference for either individual customer, will naturally deal with that one which takes the most trouble about the matter . Germans are continually sending people of importance to Russia to do deals of all sorts and in consequence Russia is prepared to deal with them in preference to a customer who sends no one, or only the office boy!
- (2) Russia is still smarting under the treatment that she received in the summer and in her hurt state of mind the compliment of sending an important personage to Moscow will be invaluable in smoothing the way to an arrangement.
- (3) The offer in certain contingencies to send a Cabinet Minister will demonstrate, as nothing else can, that we are anxious to establish better relations and in the light of that atmosphere it will be easier to solve the difficult points that will arise in the negotiations."

On September 22nd, 1939, Lord Halifax replied:

"DEAR SIR STAFFORD,

"Thank you very much for your letters of the 16th and 18th September about the Russian situation

"I am grateful to you for offering to go out to Moscow to sound the

Soviet authorities and am quite prepared to facilitate your journey, on the understanding, of course, that you would be travelling as a private individual

"As regards the Soviet visa which you will require, this cannot, as you probably know, be issued by the Soviet Embassy here. I suggest, however, that you approach M. Maisky and get him to support your application in Moscow. The visa itself can then be obtained in one of the Scandinavian capitals through which you will be passing.

"I should like if possible to see you before you start. Perhaps the best plan would be for your private secretary to arrange a time with mine

"Sincerely,  
"HALIFAX"

Here was born an idea which would soon evolve into a plan for the full use of the waiting time which became known as the "phoney period" of the war. He had long wished for an opportunity to visit India, China and America in order to learn from them concerning their affairs and to discuss them, together with their relationship to Britain, with the leaders of those countries. From these circumstances the wish began to take shape in a definite plan. The existing "absence of relationship", or as it was defined "hostile neutrality", between Britain and the Soviet Union, plus the state of affairs in India, led him to decide that he would strive to go to Russia via India and China!

But try as he might, however, he could get no decision on his political project of trade negotiations with Russia. He met M. Maisky and Maisky met Halifax, and by October 26th it almost appeared as if Stafford's plan would be put into operation. The day before, Stanley, the President of the Board of Trade, and Lord Halifax had both seen Maisky. The former had discussed at length the goods that could be exchanged, and the sending of a delegation to Moscow which he himself would lead, and everything appeared to be reaching the point of agreement along the lines Stafford had outlined. Maisky had, however, to wait for confirmation from Moscow and the days went by without news. Stafford was of the opinion that the hold-up was due entirely to political matters outside the range of the proposals. Actually, this turned out to be the case. The Russians were convinced that the stubborn resistance of the Finns to the Soviet proposal of a pact was due to the British Government's pressure upon the Finns. They were concerned, too, with the appeasement policy now being pursued by the British Government in relation to Japan.

Meanwhile there was another aspect of the situation with which he felt called upon to deal. When Hitler replied to Britain's declaration of war by a so-called Peace Offensive, Stafford held the view that Britain could not answer merely by a flat rejection of the proposals made both by Hitler and the Soviet Union. He insisted that it was necessary to give a precise answer as to what should be the basis of peace. He himself answered in two ways. He submitted a memorandum to Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, and made his first speech in Parliament since the outbreak of war. In the House of Commons he set out his views in these words:

"We on this side of the House have certainly been consistently opposed to the regime of Hitler in Germany. It would indeed have been to the great benefit of our country and the world as a whole if that antagonism had been shared by the Government during the last five years. I am as unwilling as any hon. member in this House to place reliance upon the promises of Hitler or of any similar Government in any part of the world . . . Yet it would, in my view, be the height of unjustifiable folly merely to turn down his proposals without putting forward in clear and precise terms our own objective.

"Any definitive world settlement must envisage democracy and freedom, if that is our true aim, not only in territories that have been conquered by the Germans, but throughout the world. Our care for India must be as great as our care for Poland. Our readiness to re-establish the map of Europe must be equalled by our readiness to reconsider the whole question of the Imperial conquests of the past. We cannot, without laying ourselves open to the charge of cynicism, select the territories of others for the benefits of democracy and freedom while withholding those benefits from territories from which we derive economic advantage. To go forward with a war upon such a basis would, in my view, invite disaster . . ."

He went on to outline the reforms at home which were essential to give social security and well-being to the workers of Britain. Then he declared:

"The true solution is, therefore, not to give any particular country any colony, but to pool the whole of the colonial areas as territories which the European countries should share in developing with the object of their attaining maturity and self-government as soon as possible . . ."

The memorandum he sent to Chamberlain formed the basis of a published article in *The Tribune* of October 6th, which ended with the following:

“ The answer stated in colloquial terms could be

“If Germany is prepared to give up her conquests of non-Germanic peoples and to deal with minorities under a true international system in which all the nations shall partake of the administration, then we are prepared to do the same as regards the British Empire, and enter into an economic arrangement, whereby all the resources of our various countries are pooled for the benefit of the people of the world, through the control of an economic general planning staff, drawn from all countries, by a scheme to be worked out by the nations forthwith, as a permanent basis for world peace and to be accompanied by rapid disarmament on all sides by successive stages . ”

Chamberlain replied:

“10 Downing Street,  
“Whitehall

“10th October, 1939

“MY DEAR CRIPPS,

“Many thanks for your letter and for sending me your Memorandum on Hitler's proposals. I am greatly obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in setting out your views so fully, and there was certainly no need for you to apologise for the length of your note. The problems we have to consider are of immense importance and great complexity, and it is clearly impossible to discuss them adequately in a short compass.

“I am bound, in fairness, to say that I doubt the practicability of some of your proposals, but I am sure you will not expect me to comment on them in detail at this stage, though I want you to know that I have read the Memorandum carefully and with great interest

“Yours sincerely,  
“NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.”

Stafford did not rest content with this reply. He saw Halifax and says:

“I asked him if he would object if I telephoned to Felix Frankfurter to ask him to get the President of the U S A to approach the British Government on the basis that if Hitler really meant what he said about the ethnographic division of Europe, then there did not seem any reason why a conference should not take place. After some discussion he said that if the U.S.A. did make such an approach I could take it that the most careful consideration would be given to it and that it would not embarrass the Government. He had no objection therefore to my telephoning on my own responsibility if I wished. This was the most that I could expect and the most that I wanted. . . .”

This he did. Of course he explained to Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter that this was entirely a personal effort on his part to interest President Roosevelt but he felt confident that any action taken by the President in response to his appeal would receive the most serious consideration of the British Government.

In the midst of this excitement there came an echo from a time which now seemed long ago. The Labour Party Executive met after its "summer recess", and dealt with the letters from the five expelled members who had applied for re-admission to the Labour Party on June 2nd. They were asked to express their regret for past actions, and to refrain from campaigns to change party policy. All of them refused these conditions. Stafford replied.

"I am not prepared to express regret at the action taken by me, as I am now, more than ever, convinced that the action was not only fully justified, but was the only action that I could have taken consistently with my duty to my constituents, and the best interests of the workers of this country. . . I should have thought that such matters as are dealt with in the Executive's decision had become irrelevant in the light of the national and international situation . . ."

He passed on to other things.

Ironically, too, the Government which had no use for his services when he offered them unreservedly at the outbreak of war suddenly asked his aid. Would he help in the drafting of the anti-profiteering legislation? He made a draft and Gwilym Lloyd George and Oliver Stanley accepted it. Stafford advised them on the procedure to be adopted.

After the legislation was carried through, G. Lloyd George and Stanley wanted Stafford to take on the job of administering the legislation he had drafted but "were nervous about the manufacturers' reaction" if he were appointed. One day he saw Stanley, who apologised for not appointing him as chairman of the Central Price Regulation Committee. As he had expected, so it had happened—the *trading* interests would not have him! The interests to be controlled could manage their own controlling.

These incidents he dealt with in passing. His mind was occupied with the great issues of international relations in war-time. He was deeply concerned with the situation in India and in China. He had learned much about India since the beginning of his friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he first met in England in 1937. This son of India, educated at Harrow and Cambridge, second to Gandhi in the leadership of the Indian

people, was a refined, cultured man, who with his record of unswerving loyalty and courageous leadership appealed to Stafford as few other men in the ranks of political leadership had done. Although Nehru was not a Christian, he led what Stafford would describe as a Christian life in its quality of unremitting social service to his fellow men, while he regarded his political course as that of a Socialist standing firmly and courageously to his principles, whether his path led to prison, as it had on so many occasions, or to the heights of power.

Stafford was equally concerned with the situation in China. Since his earliest interest in international affairs, he had watched from afar the course of the Chinese Revolution and the travail of the Chinese people. He knew that when Sun Yat-Sen set the national revolution going in 1911, that was the great beginning of a new birth for the Chinese people. Their betrayal by the Western Powers, when the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, had roused his indignation and played the greatest part of all in destroying his illusions concerning the League of Nations. No one knew better than he that, while China was putting up a tenacious resistance to the continued Japanese invasion, she was also in a continuing process of social revolution which had yet to reach its full consummation in a liberated China with her people on the march towards a Socialist society.

Hence it can be no matter of surprise to find him in these days dining with the Chinese Ambassador in London one day and another with Krishna Menon, who would one day be India's High Commissioner to Britain. On October 23rd he saw Halifax about his proposed journey to India, China and Moscow. Halifax was rather shy of the proposal lest it become known and it be interpreted as some London-Moscow-Chungking diplomatic manoeuvre. About India he feared a head-on collision but could not see what the Government could do about it, for he felt it to be impossible to go beyond the statement recently made by the Governor-General. He claimed that he was not a "wicked imperialist" but could not accept the Indian National Congress as the only spokesman for the Indian people. Stafford says:

"I pointed out that if we believed in Democracy, Congress did represent the majority of British India, according to the election results, and that they did distrust this Government and that the Governor-General's statement would make them more distrustful. To offer consultation only on how they could help us in the war and not on Indian



affairs was really insulting them. A Consultative Committee ten years ago was one thing, it was another to offer it ad hoc in this crisis. I agreed a head-on collision was inevitable if the Government persisted in their views and pointed out that even if he were not a thorough-going Imperialist, others in the Cabinet, such as Winston, were. We got nowhere and it was clear that the Government thought they were doing the right thing and it was no good discussing the matter further. "

Cripps explained, however, that he did not want to go to India or China or Moscow as a Government representative but in a personal capacity. All he wished for from the Government was an understanding that they would give full weight to his observations on his return. He had conferences with Sir George Schuster, Lord Hailey, Wedgwood Benn and Sir Findlater Stewart, the civil servant Chief of the India Office, and put forward the following plan:

- 1 That the Government should be prepared to assist in summoning a Constituent Assembly within one year of the termination of the war.
- 2 That the Assembly should be constituted upon the basis of the present provincial electorates, plus a proportional representation from any States who would introduce sufficient democracy to enable representatives to be elected to the Constituent Assembly.
3. That a three-fifths vote should carry in the Assembly.
- 4 That if the representatives of the major parties—judged by the provincial electoral results—agreed upon a better method of representation, then that better method of representation should be adopted.
5. That the Government would accept and abide by the results of the Constituent Assembly, provided the latter would enter into a Treaty with Great Britain for a given number of years (say 15 years), during which, the transition should be carried through, the method of transition and the financial, defence and other details to be settled in the Treaty, which should also contain some clauses giving protection to minorities in British India.

At last he was assured that if he found the Indians approved of his plan the Government would promise to give it their serious consideration. On the 29th of November he concluded his diary for the day:

"This is really promising progress and means that if I can get the Indians to consider my proposals, there will be a real chance of acceptance by the Government of this country "

On that day too he wrote

"This morning I parted from my Chambers finally and so closed a long chapter of my life at the Bar I have no regrets except for associations . "

He also wrote to his constituents

"November 29th, 1939

"DEAR COMRADES,

"As you know, I have always taken a very great interest in the affairs of India and the struggle of the Indian people to attain their freedom, and their own democratic Governments Owing to the action of the British Government and the War situation, matters have taken a very serious turn in India and it looks as if there was every prospect of a real clash occurring unless something can be done immediately to bring pressure upon the British Government to take a more enlightened view

"I have been doing what I can in this country to persuade the Government and their advisers of the need for some positive action, but I have felt that I was strongly handicapped through lack of actual knowledge of the Indian situation and Indian personalities.

"It is also clear that a great deal depends upon the advice sent by the Viceroy to the Government and nothing can be done in this direction unless I can see the Viceroy in India. In addition to this my very good friends in the Congress Party have expressed an urgent desire that I should go to India and I feel that this practical demonstration of sympathy with their views is very desirable at the present time

"I therefore decided to go to India entirely on my own, not of course in any sense as an agent or emissary for the Government, in order to get first-hand knowledge of the situation and do anything I can to assist in a solution

"I have a very strong conviction that the end of the War, when it comes, will present problems in which the Asiatic peoples will have to play a very large part, especially Russia, China and India I am therefore going to take the opportunity of going on to China to investigate the situation there, and as a result I may be away from this country for some months

"I have thought very seriously over the question of whether I was justified in leaving the country at the present time and have come to the conclusion that nothing decisive is likely to occur here before the late Spring and I shall be utilising the intervening time to the best advantage

by equipping myself with knowledge of the Indian and Chinese situation I should of course be able to return in comparatively short time if any particular situation arose which demanded my presence in England

"I know I shall take with me your best wishes and I shall convey these to the Indian people and also to our Chinese comrades

"I am sure that while I am away you will all of you do your utmost to keep the flag of Socialism and freedom flying in Bristol East

"Yours fraternally,

"R STAFFORD CRIPPS

"The General Council

and the Bristol East Divisional

Labour Party."

Twenty-four hours after the writing of this letter he had already departed from England, accompanied by Geoffrey Wilson, his secretary and friend, on a journey which lay far east of Suez and Mandalay. History was to be made on the way

## CHAPTER II

### A JOURNEY OF POLITICAL EXPLORATION

WHEN Stafford Cripps and Geoffrey Wilson set forth on their journey to the Far East they had a purpose which would pre-occupy their minds and impose limits on what they would and could see. This is not to say that they travelled with their eyes and ears closed to the world around them, but only to observe that their ideological pre-occupations would necessarily set limits to the time and energy available for that wider range of activity and interest in which they would have dearly liked to indulge.

On Thursday, November 30th, 1939, the two travellers set out on their mission, planning to be back in five months' time. It had been their intention to "hop" the first stages by air to Paris but bad weather cancelled the air service and so they reverted to the train and boat and reached Paris the next day.

True to plan and form, Stafford had arranged two interviews before lunch, one with the French Colonial Minister, Georges Mandel, and another with a Pole who had been in charge of health services in China. Cripps and Mandel discussed the problems of the Far East as they most affected Britain and France, and later in the day had a brief discussion with the French Minister of Finance, Paul Reynaud. There followed a few hours when the travellers were free to wander around Paris of the "phoney" war. They looked inside the Notre Dame Cathedral, crossed the Seine and inspected bookstalls, snatched a little refreshment and boarded the Simplon Orient Express for Lausanne, a principal stopping place in the land of neutrality. There was no time to rest in Switzerland, the oasis of peace, their train rolled into the Rhone Valley, down by the shores of Lake Maggiore to the plains of Lombardy and on to Milan. Nor was there time to look around here. Naples held them for a day.

"Straight out of our hotel windows was Vesuvius with a cloud of smoke coming out of the top. To the right were the mountains of the Sorrento peninsula, and to the left the harbour with the funnels of the *Rex* towering above everything else. It looked as if it were going to be a

fine day so we set off to explore the town but we succumbed to one of the innumerable guides who had pestered us ever since we had left the hotel to take us to Pompeii, and to Pompeii we went . ”

Much as they would have liked to look at Rome and the shadows of her ancient glories there was no time allowed for it in their schedule. Besides, Italy was in those days Fascist Italy, an ally of Nazi Germany, on the brink of war with Britain and France, and not a place for an Englishman to stay longer than absolutely necessary. Next morning they took off by aeroplane for Athens. Up they flew alongside Vesuvius and above the clouds. Occasionally, through breaks in the clouds below, they caught glimpses of the Appenine mountains which stretch like a back-bone to the country from the Lombardy Plains down to Italy's toe. Flying south-east they crossed the Gulf of Taranto towards the island of Corfu, the spot where Mussolini, shortly after he came to power, first shook his fist at Europe and then let the Greeks know the kind of neighbours they had in the offing. Shortly they passed near to the city of Athens. There below them, as they circled to descend, was the Acropolis but from the air it looked amazingly insignificant. After one hour's stay they went on to Alexandria.

“Fortunately, the aeroplane was extraordinarily comfortable, with chairs that let down and had foot rests attached. A steward brought round coffee, tea, tomato juice and biscuits at all the right times, and perhaps more important of all, the plane made so little noise that it was perfectly easy to talk without ever raising the voice above normal conversational level ”

Five passengers, besides Stafford and his secretary, were aboard. Three of them were English and two Dutch. The most interesting fellow passenger was a Mr. Baker, eighty-three years of age, making his eightieth journey to the East. He was an eminent agriculturalist, with plantations in Malaya and interests in New Zealand. Stafford and he were quickly involved in deep and enthusiastic conversation about compost-making and soil fertility, oblivious to their journey through the air. Suddenly Alexandria lay below. As they stepped out of the plane, the sun was setting and before them stretched the sands of Egypt with palm trees silhouetted against the bright red sky, a lovely scene.

Hardly had they arrived in their hotel and gone to rest, than the early morning was upon them.

"The sun came up above the horizon as we were diving to the airport this morning, and within a few minutes we had taken off. For the first half hour we flew over the delta of the Nile, a wonderfully rich and fertile region, with so much water about everywhere that it must be mighty difficult for the people to get anywhere at all. Then over the sea for an hour to Palestine and ten minutes later we landed at Lydda, the airport of Jaffa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. That airport is a real work of art. It was built by a man called Price, who is architect to the Palestine Government, in conjunction with Gumley, the Director of Civil Aviation. The proportion and the columns are superb and there is a lot of simple but most delightful ironwork. It is difficult to believe that a better airport could exist anywhere. . . . We headed straight for Baghdad, first over rocky hills covered with olive trees, then over the Jordan Valley with a view of the Dead Sea in one direction and the Sea of Galilee in the other, then over rising hills inhabited by the Trans-Jordan Arabs and so on to the Syrian desert. That was the most fascinating part of the whole flight so far. We were five thousand feet above the ground and kept seeing little black rectangular shapes which we identified (quite rightly) as the tents of the nomadic tribes. Often we saw tiny specks round about them which were caravans crossing the desert. It seemed quite impossible that such numbers of people and animals could keep alive on the amount of water and green stuff which we were able to see. A panubiot would have a pretty thin time! We crossed the pipe-line several times and saw encampments along it, and were able to see where the caravan trails wound their way through the sand."

"After about two hours, we at last saw a river which we finally identified as the Euphrates. Cultivation began to appear, and soon we were in an area intensely cultivated by means of a most elaborate system of irrigation. Then we came to the Tigris and a few minutes later landed at Baghdad airport, some way from the town, which is reported to be entirely uninteresting. . . ."

But it figured once in the dream of a Kaiser who saw in his mind's eye a railway stretching from Berlin, a highway of Empire from the centre of Europe through Baghdad to the East.

The travellers record that:

"We followed the course of the Tigris which winds so that we crossed it every few minutes, and at one time the pilot came down to 100 ft. or less so that we might see the ruins of Ctesiphon—a huge construction built in the 13th century entirely of brick, with an arched span which seemed impossibly large for such material."

Taking over the writing of the diary at this point, Wilson says:

"I have always imagined that Mesopotamia, in which the Garden of Eden was supposed to be situated, would be a mass of luxuriant vegetation. That's what comes from looking at the map and seeing it coloured green. In fact, it is dull and uniformly brown except in patches along the banks of the rivers and elsewhere, watered entirely by means of irrigation works. It was not very interesting except in bits, and Stafford spent his time reading about China and killing flies.

"A few miles above Basra the two rivers join and they celebrate the fact by flooding the entire countryside. Instead of cultivated land there is nothing but marsh, inhabited by the Marsh-Arabs, whose villages as often as not are entirely surrounded by water, and visible means of livelihood are absolutely non-existent. It was about the most dreary and desolate place that could be imagined, and even the desert would be paradise compared with it. Just at sunset we landed at Basra airport, with which is combined the Shatt-el-Arab Hotel."

Half an hour before sunrise the next morning, they took off from Basra. It was pitch dark and suddenly they were over the Abadan oil-field, "which looked like some huge jewel with its twinkling green and yellow lights." As that sight vanished from view, the sun rose. There was no longer a creeping in of the dawn and gradations of light from darkness to grey and on to the golden light. Quickly the sun was up and the travellers were flying towards it as it rose higher and higher over the mountains of Persia and along the coast line of the Persian Gulf, seven hundred miles of desolate shore:

"There was scarcely a single patch of green—nothing but sand and mountains made of sand, with high mountains in the distance and an occasional tiny village which was hardly distinguishable at the height of 11,000 feet at which we were flying. . . ."

All this was most annoying. Where was that "Persian Garden" and all the fantastic places of beauty and luxury supposed to be located in this land? Where *was* that

". . . Strip of Herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known?"

They saw nothing of it. The old Persian poet, Omar Khayyám, must have been dreaming of some other land, for here

"It seemed quite impossible that people could find enough to live on in such a place. . . . The most extraordinary place was the point of Man

over which we passed just before we reached Jask. It is a quite fantastic collection of rocky mountains rising steeply from the sea, with occasional narrow plateaux at the top. These plateaux were the chief cultivated areas, though how anybody got to them was a mystery. . "

They swept along the coast of Persia and suddenly were thrilled to identify the spot where they crossed into India. Hardly had the first excitement passed than Karachi lay before them. Here the Mayor of Karachi, the local leader of the Indian Congress, representatives of the press and many others were waiting to greet them.

The Indians have a custom of "saying it with flowers", and the waiting throng garlanded the two guests and greeted them as though they were long absent friends returning home. Although Karachi was simply a stopping place for but an hour, they were in India and work began at once.

Writes Stafford.

"I spent the hour at Karachi having questions fired at me from all sides, wanting to know my views on every conceivable subject. . I also put a good many questions myself as to the possibility of a settlement of the Indian difficulty, and gathered that as a whole they thought Gandhi was being too slow and holding them back too much, but if there was any chance of the British Government giving way, then perhaps it was the right thing to do. . "

From Karachi they flew to Allahabad, where Jawaharlal Nehru and fifteen other Congressmen were waiting with a most beautiful garland of flowers for Stafford. The two men greeted each other warmly. They were friends of some years standing, and had so much in common that they felt toward each other like brothers who could talk with frankness and understanding. Quickly they departed by car and, driving along the main Calcutta-Delhi road, came at last to Snad Chaven, home of the Nehrus.

Stafford submitted to Nehru a draft of his proposals which he had discussed with the leaders of the British Government at home, and sent a copy to Gandhi, so that the latter would have time to consider it before he met him.

Nehru and a few of his friends who were invited to meet Cripps found it difficult to believe the British Government would make a promise of independence and fix a date for it. They wanted to know too what was meant by the repetition of the phrase "Dominion Status". If this expression really meant "inde-



pendence" why did they not say so? Why did not Sir Stafford himself use the expression "independence" if it meant the same as "Dominion Status"? It was shorter. They knew what they meant by independence, while they were not sure what the British meant by "Dominion Status". Whilst they asked these questions repeatedly and expressed their views about them the Indian leaders wanted to show their visitors what they were doing where they had responsible government.

The day after his arrival in Allahabad, and his first talk with Nehru and a group of leaders of the Indian National Congress, he records:

"The day has been so full of interest that it is only the high lights that can find a place here. It began with a visit to the Agricultural College about six miles away, of which Sam Higginbotham is the head, an American institution which now has such a reputation that students come there from all over India to study agriculture and the use of the products of the land.

"On our way back to Allahabad, we passed the Central Prison where Nehru and Ranjit Pandit spent so much of their time, and also a Basic College. The latter is a part of a new educational scheme which Congress has started in all the Provinces where they have control and particularly in the United Provinces. It is on similar lines to the Montessori system, and is intended for children between the ages of five and ten. The idea is that the children should learn by doing something useful, and although the scheme is in its infancy, it has already broken down much of the hostility which the educational officials had at first shown.

"The whole place left an impression of an enormous vitality that had been released among the people by the fact that with their own government they were responsible for their own affairs, and even the resignation of the Congress Ministry is not likely to effect this particular development. The school at Naini, which we had been to earlier, was run on the same lines, and we were full of admiration at the results produced with pitifully inadequate materials—how inadequate can be partly judged from the fact that the teachers were paid only 17 rupees, or 27/- a month.

"After lunch we set out by car again to visit a village. We crossed the Ganges and then turned off the metalled road on to a track composed mainly of dust. The entire population of the village turned out when our car arrived and it was quite touching to see their devotion to Nehru and his simple unaffected interest in them. Some rural development had been carried out here, so the cattle were better cared for than elsewhere, and there was a tiny reading room. We went inside one of the houses—all of which are built of mud with sun-baked tile roofs, and the

poverty was awful. It consisted of two rooms, the first used as a sort of kitchen, about six feet by twelve, and lit only by such light as came in through the door, and the other room opening off it, about the same size, and light of its own. The entire household goods consisted of not more than a dozen utensils and a few pieces of white cloth, but the whole place was spotlessly clean. They don't seem to mind how filthy the village is, but the house must be properly kept.

"Our guide this morning was Ranjit Pandit, Nehru's brother-in-law. He is one of the most cultured and delightful men that I have ever met, and is a member of the U P legislature. He is a mine of information for all our questions about trees and birds, agriculture, industry, religion and politics, and while he was in prison he occupied himself making an English translation of one of the Sanscrit classics. He also gave us a most interesting account of the British dealings with the Princes, about which he has written in a book which he is going to give us, and explained the political position in the Punjab."

The next day there were so many requests from societies in the University of Allahabad that there was no alternative way of meeting their requests than for Stafford to address nearly all the students of the University in its great hall—nearly twelve hundred people. Nehru also spoke and once more was received with that tremendous enthusiasm he evokes wherever he goes. After the meeting, Stafford and Nehru headed an impromptu procession down the road back to Anand Bhawan.

From Allahabad they went on to Delhi. Of this journey by rail Geoffrey Wilson said:

"We are travelling in a first-class carriage. We have a large box to ourselves for the moment. The box is the full width of the train and about twelve feet long, contains two beds, two chairs, two electric fans, three different kinds of covering over each of the eight windows, and has a lavatory attached in which there is a shower bath, but no towel. Fortunately, we were far-sighted. It's very spacious but rather depressing, the woodwork being dirty brown and the upholstery a drab green imitation leather, nor does it appear too clean. The whole affair looks as though it had been in the height of fashion thirty-five years ago, and had not been touched since. We carry our own bedding with us in a large roll like a holdall. We shall be spending ten of our sixteen nights in India in one of these, so we are trying hard to find out how to behave. . . ."

He added:

"The night journey was not altogether a success, and the carriage looked even diabler than this morning than it did last night, after it had acquired a good thick layer of dust on a stretch of line which we were assured was comparatively clean!"

Nevertheless, they arrived at Delhi, the city of grandeur and power, the capital of India

There are really two Delhis, the old and the new. It is the ancient capital of Hindustan, standing midway between Bombay in the West and Calcutta in the East. The city had a population of two million people in the days of the Great Mogul Empire when Jehan was the ruler. He was responsible for the building of the Great Mogul Palace, a magnificent structure, a rival to the Kremlin of Moscow. And also of the mosque of white marble and sandstone, the famous Taj Mahal which took ten years to build.

If old Delhi, with its palace of purpled ease and tomb of exquisite beauty, typified the grandeur and power of the dead Empire, New Delhi in its own splendour exemplified the majesty and might of Britain's power at its zenith. Here were the Viceroy's residence and the Parliament building which, in their magnificence and spaciousness, surpass the buildings of Washington. Beside them, as if taking shelter beneath the imperial power, are the palaces of the Indian Princes and the luxurious private houses of the rich.

All that was interesting, but the travellers were busy paving the way from the pomp and circumstance of yesterday to the liberation of to-morrow. They were searching the minds of men and grappling with the foundations of power. They started the day with press interviews. Then came Birla, an important mill-owner supporter of Congress.

He held the view that he favoured separation of the Moslems and the Hindus, just as in business "you cannot carry on with an unsatisfactory partner. It would mean ceding those districts with more than fifty-one per cent Moslems and a shift of population, but if peace can be secured in any way, it should be tried." Liaquat Ali Khan, the Secretary of the Moslem League, said that "it would not be possible to settle with the British unless there was first an internal settlement. . . . Unless a constitution could be devised which would make it impossible for one community to rule by itself, it would never bring peace to the country. . . . There must be some form where the majority could not do anything unless it could carry a certain proportion of the minority. The majority of both communities is

poor people. The Moslems had three thoughts There were (1) Partition, but not on the lines of the Moslem Empire; (2) Free and independent states, with a federation of the Hindu and Moslem Provinces and a Confederation of the two; (3) Dominion Status for each of the Provinces, with a federation at the centre to which should be given only such powers as the Provinces agree to give, and giving the Provinces the right to opt out .”

Until night they listened to the views of leaders of organisations.

That was a day in Delhi

During the night they travelled, next reaching Lahore, the capital of the Punjab. Here they conferred with the Prime Minister of the Punjab Government, Sir Sikander Hyat-Khan, and other members of the Cabinet Sir Sikander was a Moslem and nominally a member of the Moslem League but he would not permit it to function in the province. The diary reveals the Prime Minister held the view that.

“It was time for the British Government to make a declaration of Dominion Status Half a dozen people could settle the communal question in principle in half an hour The States would have to be treated differently and would need a respite to get used to things There would be no need to change political boundaries He had suggested to Jinnah and Gandhi that they should put their cards on the table but nobody would do it. . India was not prepared for violence and would not be for another fifty years It would soon be suppressed by the help of various sections in India He agreed with Gandhi that there must be an agreed settlement, and a Constituent Assembly would do more harm than good from a communal point of view.”

Stafford then interviewed two leaders of the Akali Sikh Party, a communal party. This one and two other Sikh parties which are Socialist were completely committed to Indian independence but had no particular views as to how it should be obtained. From the Moslems, Stafford turned again to meet a group of Hindus of the Mahasabha. The most Stafford could get from these was: “First settle our differences, then get rid of the British. If you make it an essential condition of a settlement that you must have the consent of the Moslem League as represented by Jinnah, you make it impossible.”

From Lahore the missionaries returned to Delhi for another day of interviews and discussion. They met Sir Jagdish Frasad, Member of the Viceroy's Council for Education, Health and Lands.

Next came Ingles, *The Times* correspondent. Like almost

everybody else they had seen, he took "Dominion Status" for granted within the quite near future at the end of the war. Later, Stafford saw various Government officials but nothing came from them beyond the evidence that they were worried by the state of affairs. A reputed die-hard named Sir Reginald Maxwell, Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, seemed to take for granted that India would be free in the near future. He gave his views of the working of the new constitution and the manoeuvring of the rival parties and summed up his opinions with the advice that. "They should not fight on details but agree on what sort of body could speak for India, and the Government should bind itself, by treaty or otherwise, on the line of action to be taken on communal and economic matters." There was not much of the die-hard in such opinions.

Another day was gone. The travellers took a train for Bombay. For hours they gazed on the countryside as they rolled along. Now they saw a fertile land very different from anything they had yet seen, passed through rich woodland, crossed many rivers, saw large herds of cattle and were specially struck by the gay colours worn by everybody, male and female alike, "in so far as they wore anything." Incidentally, it had dawned on some authority of the railways that there was a "war on". In the carriages were notices announcing "Precautions against possible Air Raids. Please in your own interests keep the window shutters of your carriage closed between Bombay Central Station and Bassein Road after darkness has set in."

Bombay as a port is one of the largest and best in the world. It is the western terminus of the Indian railways and its Victorian station is regarded as one of the finest structures of its kind in the world. Bombay is to India what New York is to the United States of America. Set amidst bold and striking scenery with more than a million population it is at one and the same time a great city of immense wealth and a cesspool of poverty, misery, disease and filth.

But it was not these things which our travellers came to see. No sooner had they had lunch than Stafford went to the Opera House, where he addressed the Civil Liberties Union—an audience of about a thousand people. The next day he talked with the Governor of Bombay and interviewed Dr. Ambedkar, the leader of the Harijans or "untouchables." The latter gave the impression of great sincerity, but was somewhat embittered by the experiences through which he himself and his people had passed.

There are about sixty million untouchables scattered throughout India. They constitute about ten per cent of every village, and nowhere had they sufficient strength to protect their rights and were in much the same position as the Jews of the ghettos of Europe. To Ambedkar "swaraj" meant more domination by the Hindus and an increased molestation of the untouchables. He saw no alternative to that of transportation of the untouchables to new land, which he considered could easily be made available.

Now came one of the most important of all the conferences. Stafford went to see Mr. Jinnah, the leader of the Moslem League, at his home on Malabar Hill. This tall, thin, dark figure of a man gave the impression of one in everlasting conflict with himself. He was, however, the most powerful figure in the Moslem League, neither admired nor loved by his followers. But he held a key position to the future of India.

He opened the conversation with Stafford by suggesting that, as he was "being shepherded around the country by the Congress", Stafford's mind was already made up. But after Stafford had put him at ease in this respect, he proceeded to give his views on the situation, and made a detailed analysis of the distribution of the Moslems and the history of the communal dispute. He regarded democracy in the English sense to be out of the question, and impossible to apply in India. He said that in the villages the Hindus and the Moslems had nothing to fight about, and had nothing in common. The elections were a pure communal division of the population with a permanent majority of the Indians which made democracy unworkable. He stated his views with ability and clarity, and there was no doubt about his detestation of the Hindus. He said he would consider Stafford's memorandum on its merits. Perhaps it was the last chance to secure co-operation. He was of the opinion that if England were defeated in the war, India would be split into a hundred divisions, and this would form the nucleus of a central organisation which could then take over.

Cripps later went to the Trade Union headquarters for a talk with Joshi, the Trade Union leader. There emerged from this conversation probably the most important observation, to which none of the political leaders had yet referred. Joshi said that in the history of the unions they had had no communal troubles in their ranks, although twenty-five per cent of their members were Moslems and the unions included untouchables among their

members. In their view, the best cure for the communal disease was working together on an economic basis rather than a political one.

From Bombay, Stafford Cripps and Geoffrey Wilson journeyed to Hyderabad to see the head of the most feudal State in India. Waiting at the station to receive them was a very smart A D C who got into great difficulties. Stafford and Geoffrey were travelling second-class. That led to a case of "mistaken identity", for as they stepped on to the platform they were ignored while the A D C sought to persuade a good-looking solitary Englishman, travelling first-class, that he was really Sir Stafford Cripps. A look of horror swept across his face as the second-class passenger announced himself, but jumping to attention and making all the necessary salutes, he rushed Stafford into a car and swept Geoffrey aside into another one, provided for the person of inferior social standing. The idea of his travelling in the same car as Stafford passed his comprehension.

In due course Stafford was ushered into the presence of His Exalted Highness the Nizam. Here Stafford got a shock, for as he entered the ante-chamber, he was met by a middle-aged, unkempt-looking gentleman in a white coat that would have looked much smarter had it been sent recently to a cleaner. He thought this gentleman must be the Nizam's secretary. But it was not the secretary. It was "H E H." himself. They talked together for an hour, seated on a plush-covered sofa surrounded by chairs and knick-knacks that might have been lifted from the boarding house of a retired civil servant on the Brighton sea-front. Stafford is not inexpert in furniture-making, and a pretty good judge of what is good and what is bad in that line. He was startled to find this man of wealth living amidst such fusty, second-class stuff. But he was soon to find that the Nizam had a mind as fusty as his furniture. Nevertheless he was polite and charming and listened patiently. Stafford told him British India would certainly get her freedom after the war and the pressure on the States would be much greater if they had not themselves taken steps to make their governments more democratic. When that happened, paramountcy would have to go and it would be no use thinking that British troops would be available to uphold the States. The Nizam listened attentively to all Stafford had to say, asked a few polite questions, but did not show that he was likely to do anything about anything.

On recounting his impressions to Sir Akbar Hyderis, a state official, the latter confirmed Stafford's impressions, saying:

"What could one expect from a man who had never been outside his own State except on one or two occasions to Delhi, and who had had no education?"

Sir Akbar himself is, of course, a cultured man, a lover of the arts and a politician. He understood the realities of the situation in this province, but he was no democrat. He recognised quite clearly that the Moslem community of Hyderabad, comprising not more than fifteen per cent of the population, was the ruling body and completely identified with the feudal landlords. The Moslems admit there is no logical basis for their domination of eighty-five per cent of the population which is Hindu. Their concern, however, was not for logic but for power, which they had and intended to hold as long as they could. And there Stafford had to leave them, for his time-table said. "You are due in Wardha, two hundred and seventy miles away from here, at eight-thirty to-morrow morning."

At Wardha the travellers were met according to plan by Nehru and his friends, who had made arrangements for Stafford to meet a little bald-headed, dark-skinned man, the redoubtable Gandhi, undoubtedly the greatest leader India had produced in its long struggle for independence and freedom. He was an ascetic, somewhat of a mystic, a profound believer in the simple life, a shrewd politician whom no one could divert from his course. This was the man whose influence was so great in the Indian National Congress and among the millions of its supporters that Stafford Cripps could have saved himself a great deal of time and energy by submitting his proposals to this man alone. For such was his power that if he rejected them they would be turned down by the people of India. If Stafford did not realise it at this time he would later on. Indeed the British Government would ultimately do what Gandhi said they should do from the outset of all negotiations—leave the Indians to settle their own future forms of government. Ever since Gandhi became the leader of Congress in 1919 his leadership had been unchallengeable. Jawaharlal Nehru says of him:

"It was the utter sincerity of the man and his personality that gripped, he gave the impression of tremendous inner reserves of power . . . Every gesture had meaning and grace, without a false touch. There were no rough edges or sharp corners about him, no trace of vulgarity or commonness, in which, unhappily, our middle class excel. Having found an inner peace, he radiated it to others and marched through life's tortuous ways with firm and undaunted step . . ."



His whole life was dedicated to a purpose—Indian independence. But his means of attaining his purpose were as important to him as the aim. Indeed it might be truly said the means were more important and were ends in themselves, for they meant to him a way of life.

Gandhi's rejection of violence was more than a political tactic. It was a positive assertion of the human spirit against material power. It implied a supreme self-control and a superb serenity of the mind combined with a tremendous faith in his fellow man. It was this which made him the natural leader of the Congress in 1919 when he first proposed the non-violent passive resistance methods against the Rowlatt Acts of that year. These Acts were measures of repression whereby people could be arrested and tried without the checks and formalities provided by the law. Passive resistance meant turning the cheek to the smiter, being ready to face imprisonment, beatings, death, without violent retaliation. Through the years since that time he and scores of thousands of his followers had been imprisoned time and again. The little dark-skinned, almost ugly man had never wavered. He belonged to the mystics who walked by faith. But he was an intellectual too, a trained lawyer and politician with a remarkable capacity for seeing essentials and first principles and taking the measure of his fellow men. The flesh pots made no appeal to him. For Gandhi a man was rich according to the fewness of his material wants and the range of his mind. He himself lived in a hut with a bamboo framework covered with a mixture of mud and cow dung. When Nehru brought Stafford Cripps and Geoffrey Wilson to see him in this mud hut in the village of Segoon some five miles from Wardha they literally filled the hut. Gandhi's bed was on the floor. There were a few pieces of bamboo furniture around, a packing-case, a few books and papers and his false teeth in a box. He didn't much care about those teeth and they were in the box more frequently than in his mouth.

What a meeting was this! The little elderly dark man living a life as simple as that of any peasant on his patch of land and yet a man to whom millions looked with adoration and faith. He sat with crossed legs upon his mattress bed. Beside him on the floor sat the handsome intellectual Nehru. Both faced the tall bespectacled cultured lawyer-politician, the son of an English baron, Sir Stafford Cripps, K C, M P, sitting on a stool in his socks, charming, free and easy. There, over a simple meal of bread and fruit, they talked of how to take "the brightest star"

from the British Crown and set four hundred million people free from Imperial control. They talked. They took the measure of each other. Gandhi thought Stafford "lacked humility". Stafford thought Gandhi "shrewd and clever". Stafford explained his document. The next day they met again after Gandhi had had more time to meditate on his proposals. Stafford Cripps said of this meeting

"He (Gandhi) was convinced that the next step lay with the British Government, and like all other members of Congress, he did not think it was possible for an agreement to be come to with the Moslem League so long as His Majesty's Government adopted its present policy of fostering the importance of minority opinion. . . . He takes the view that given a real intention by H.M.G. to solve the problems and give freedom to India, it can be done. . . . H.M.G. must make up its mind whether it trusted Congress, and, if it did, must rely on Congress and the Constituent Assembly to safeguard the minorities, as, of course, they must. Congress could not organise gangsterism even if it wanted to, as all its history of non-violence was against it, and its whole policy in this direction made it impossible for it to contemplate government without consent of all communities, and that to obtain this they were prepared to make every reasonable concession. Whatever the composition of its membership, Congress was and must remain essentially non-communal because it believed in equality and non-violence. But he hoped they might lead the world to the adoption of that creed and practice nationally and internationally. . . ."

Stafford adds:

"One cannot but be impressed with the vigour with which Gandhi holds to his creed, and the calmness with which he is prepared for any sacrifice in order to attain it. His whole way of life, with its extreme simplicity and selflessness, is part of his creed and demonstrates his sincerity. . . . I feel there is a much better chance of the solution of the problem while he is still alive and in control than there will be if and when he goes. Nehru is the next in importance to Gandhi and then Rajagopalachari of Madras and Vallabhai Patel of Bombay."

And now for Calcutta and the Viceroy. They caught the "Calcutta Mail" and arrived there on December 22nd and began the final round of conferences culminating with a meeting with the Viceroy. For an hour Stafford talked to this sphinx-like person, about the political situation in India, about his

discussions with the Government at home, his memorandum, and the next steps to be taken in India. He summarised his impressions of all the conversations and conferences he had had in the recent journey across India.

Says Stafford

"I told him that, in my view, negotiations between the Moslem League and the Congress were out of the question at present unless a third party brought them together and that *he* was the only possible third party, also that they should be asked to put down in writing, Congress, how far it was prepared to go in meeting the Moslem demands, and the Moslem League, exactly what demands it made, so that he might compare the two statements and attempt to bridge the difference by negotiation

I further told him that in my view, unfortunately, Zetland had little power or authority in England, and that owing to the preoccupation of other members of the Cabinet with war questions he as Viceroy, was in fact the most important determining factor on the question of Indian policy. I left him with a copy of the memorandum which I prepared in London and told him of Gandhi's reaction to it, also the large sheet of results of the last elections."

The end of his Indian mission was at hand. He felt that his journey had been worthwhile. He now knew from first-hand acquaintance and free discussion with all the most important people controlling the affairs of India what they thought and what he thought should be done. Convinced that all he had seen and heard supported the course he had taken, he hastened on his way. But before leaving India there was one man he felt he must see—the poet Tagore, who lived in an old-fashioned mansion on the outskirts of Calcutta. Of this visit Stafford wrote:

"There must have been five vast courtyards with buildings all round. We were left by the secretary to wait in an extremely pleasant, simply furnished and restful room and then we were taken to see the poet. He was in his chair in his bedroom, dressed in a black sort of gown that set off his magnificent white beard. The room itself was as simple as could be imagined—a small bed, two tables, four chairs, some perfectly lovely red roses, and that was all. He talked with us for nearly an hour, of the Chinese, of the situation in India and the British in India. He was very philosophical in his manner and very gentle and we considered it a great privilege to have that time with him, though we should very much liked to have gone to Santiniketan and seen the work he is doing there."

And that ended Christmas Day, 1939. The next morning the travellers went to the Dum Dum airport, climbed into an aeroplane and soared high over the mouth of the great and sacred river Ganges until it was lost to view as they swept eastward to Rangoon.

## IN TIME FOR THE SHOWDOWN

STAFFORD CRIPPS and Geoffrey Wilson arrived at the Rangoon airport in the French aeroplane which had brought them from Calcutta. They made for the Strand Hotel—the best in the town. There they were met by Mr P L Young, the Consul-General, and by the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs for China. They stayed only one night in this expensive hotel and the next day went to stay with U Tin Tut, “a civil servant with a very nice and comfortable house and three charming small daughters”

On that day, too, a deputation arrived from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. This consisted of Donald, an Australian adviser to Chiang, T Sung of the Ministry of Economics, together with T K. Seng, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Consul. Chiang Kai-shek had sent a message welcoming Stafford and his friend to China and announcing that all was ready for the further stages of their journey. That meant there would be very little time to take stock of the situation in Burma. But he did meet various groups of people, workers' organisations and political representatives of one kind and another. He went “slumming” in Rangoon and visited the oil refineries at Suriam and Seikk along with some workers' leaders. He did not get the impression that Burma was likely to hit the high road to independence for a long time to come. His most important interview was with the Governor when he reached Mandalay.

The British Governor of Burma lived at Government House, Mandalay—an extraordinary place. Surrounded by a moat about a hundred feet wide, it stands on the wall of a fort in an enclosure two and a half miles square. The wall is of lovely red brick. The house itself is constructed entirely of wood. It is as wide as the wall and stretches along it for a great length. All the rooms open out of a long open passage running the entire length of the building. A wonderful view opens from the passage over the moat to the Mandalay Hill. But the isolation by moat and the old-fashioned wall of the middle ages symbolised also the remoteness of contact and outlook from those of the people of the governing elements.

Of the talk with the Governor, Stafford wrote:

"I had a talk about the Chinese position and found him very sympathetic to China and quite confident that China would be victorious. He said he always saw as many of the Chinese Ministers as possible when they came to Burma and expressed his desire to see Donald, who had not yet turned up in Mandalay. He told me that it was due to him persuading the ministers after a long effort that the Burma Road was opened up, but he was not in favour of a railway being constructed, as from the point of view of Burma it could not be remunerative. From that point of view he regarded it as a strategic danger, as he thought the frontier could now be defended against China by Burma, but if the railway went through it could not be, except by posting large forces on the border, which would be very expensive."

Now the journey from Burma into China really began. The railway ends at Mandalay. From there they had to proceed by car along the road to Lashio and mount the famous Burma Road. Their way lay directly north-eastward from Mandalay through exciting country. Stafford said of it:

"Wherever we were there were the most glorious views of mountains and valleys, not fierce or wild although much of the country was quite uninhabited, but with a certain softness which made it the most beautiful country I have ever seen. The first half was through densely wooded country but gradually it became barer, until towards sunset we dropped into the valley of the Schweli river which was a mass of paddy fields, and we watched the sun go down behind the mountains at the head of the valley in a glorious light of red and blue and green.

"The people and their clothing were as varied as the scenery and we wished we had someone with us who could tell us all about them. Mostly they were Shans and Karens, sometimes with caravans or bullocks or ponies, sometimes in a procession by themselves carrying their wares over their shoulders. These they invariably carried in bundles or baskets on either end of a stick over the shoulder so that the weight was balanced. Some carried bows though there were no visible signs of arrows, and nearly all had long knives which they carried in wooden sheaths, and many had slung over their shoulders gaily coloured bags with tassels hanging from the bottom. The most attractive were worn by some of the women, who had dark-coloured trousers, often embroidered with a deep red, and black or dark blue embroidered skirts down to their knees with dark blue and red turbans, and they, like the men, always had their bundles balanced at the end of a pole. There was definitely an autumn

look about the country so that the flowers were in any case not at their best, but they were so covered with dust along the whole road that it was difficult to see much except bright yellow Korean chrysanthemums and yellow rock roses. There was also in blossom a tree which had every appearance of being some sort of cherry."

Whether it was an unknown Chinese with a sense of humour, or the Australian, Donald, who was responsible for diverting the travellers from the main Burma Road to cross the Burmese-China frontier over the bamboo bridge, is not known. But it certainly gave them an un-Chinese reception, for they landed into the centre of a most modern aircraft factory under American supervision. They were housed in an American block, a brand new spacious wooden building, and dined in a fair-sized ballroom complete with Christmas tree, soft lights and ping-pong tables.

Stafford says

"It belonged to the Curtiss-Wright Corporation and the superintendent M. D. Walsh is a very fine type of man, quiet but obviously most efficient. The works manager, Hunter, and the chief engineer Green are both excellent fellows, and the former in particular impressed me greatly in his attitude of care for all the staff and employees. Some 2,000 people are living on the site which occupies a square mile and a large number of coolies live outside in their own huts. The factory originally started in Hangchow and then the Japanese made that unsafe so they moved to Hankow, and they had just started to build at Kunming when that was bombed, and finally they came to their present site. A year ago it was virgin land, and in spite of the fact that all the building material and machinery has to come up through Rangoon and Bhamo and thence 70 miles by a very poor road they had already started producing aeroplanes, and hope within six months to be turning out one a day.

"Before we left the staff assembled, both Chinese and American, and Col. Ham made a short speech in English, introducing me as the leader of the English Liberals!"

After this surprising introduction, the travellers were switched back to the main Burma Road, to continue their journey to Chungking. On they rolled through open country, passing here and there the local Shans dressed in their dark blue costumes and turbans. Here the underlife were few and wild life was more abundant. They saw an eagle soaring in the sky and saw the birds of the paddy-fields and wild duck.

They entered the Hangshi State and the Sawbwa. A Mr. Y. C. Fang came to see Stafford. He was the head of the Sawbwa, an

hereditary office which had been in the Fang family for three hundred years. His duty was to keep order in the district, for which job he must provide his own soldiers, keep the roads in condition, provide education and perform other social services. For this he retained all taxation collected, and made no other contribution to the central exchequer. He was not a prince but a state official. The taxation consists of a land tax and a poll tax. The population of this area of sixteen hundred square miles ranges from thirty to forty thousand persons. Leaving Hangshu behind them the travellers began the ascent of mountains and the country became bleaker and barer. Bamboo disappeared from the countryside and fir trees, scrub and long grass marked the landscape. Up and up they went to six thousand seven hundred feet, and then down the Salween gorge. All the sides were steep, deep red in colour and terraced into fantastic patterns by the walls of paddy-fields. From their height, as they descended, the view was as from an aeroplane. Mountain ranges stretched as far as the eye could see.

At last they reached the town of Paoshin, the first Chinese town they had seen. It was a fair-sized market-town once used as a place of banishment from Peking of officials who had fallen into disfavour. They passed through about seven gates and narrow streets packed with people, on to a Rest House once a Taoist Temple, a jumbled mass of tiled buildings decorated with a variety of odd animal figures in stone, disporting themselves in many manners of positions. The Rest House was perched high above the town, amidst ancient courtyards connected by circular doorways. Here the travellers stayed for a day and, as usual, spent it in seeing all they could of the place and interviewing all and sundry who could give them the information they were after; tell them of the thirty thousand in and around the town, of the magistrate and his powers, his revenue, his budget, the council of elected persons and who elected them.

On they went into the Mekong Valley, travelled along twenty miles of gorge, crossed a suspension bridge made of steel ropes and wood, climbed three thousand feet up the mountainside, and reached the Guest House of Yung Ping, having covered a stretch of ninety miles in four and a half hours. And then on again, climbing until they reached eight thousand feet through thick pine forests. They got some compensation for the climb when they looked over the valley of the Yang river from the mountain top, for ahead, in the valley stretching out before them, they could see on the far side a huge range of snow-covered mountains. But



there could be no staying here, so down into the valley they went and across the Yang Pi river, and up through gorge after gorge of great splendour until they reached the town of Hsiakwan and another Guest House, much like that at Paoshin. Here they were startled to find a number of soldiers standing with fixed bayonets. But that was a guard of honour for Stafford's benefit. The manager of the Highway Company was the host of the two guests and entertained them for two days. He told them that life in Tali Fu was almost the same as it had been a thousand years ago, and truly they saw little that was modern here. They were extremely surprised to find:

"The inhabitants include a number of Moslems and also Chinese Jews, who came to China 2,000 years ago, and settled in Hunan, whence the Jews in Tali Fu are come. They still retain the Hebrew language and religion, and are chiefly engaged in the merchant and distributing trades. Once a year, in May, there is a great market in Tali Fu with people coming from Tibet and all the West, and bringing with them furs and local manufactures, and at this time Tali Fu presents the most marvellous medley of costumes of every kind."

At a little place called Unnan they were stopped by a soldier with a red flag. The Generalissimo had sent a messenger with a note to Stafford saying that his private aeroplane had come there to take him and his friend by air the rest of the journey! Up into the sky they went, in a delightful four-seater Beechcraft plane, swept over a jumble of mountains twelve thousand feet high, saw in perspective the road they had been travelling, and within little more than half an hour topped the last range of mountains.

Below them lay a great lake with Kunming situated at its north-western end. There on an island in the middle of the lake was the hotel which was to be their residence for five days. It was a modern hotel with all European sanitary conveniences and service. Here the Australian, Mr. Donald, was waiting for them and at once became their guide and informant.

From him they learned much of the background of China, old and new, as they travelled around Kunming and district.

Again they began the rounds—medical college, local government administration, the railways, the banks, machine works, machine tool factory, learning of the minerology of the province, its transport developments, its social services, the economic and political structure and so on. And Stafford makes this note in his diary:

"The two impressions one carried away were first, the amazingly diverse and accurate work which was being done under improvised conditions inspired by the determination to preserve China, and secondly, the fact that Great Britain is being completely left out as a supplier owing to the foolish policies of the past. The whole impression today is that the connection between China on the one hand and America, Switzerland, Germany and Russia on the mechanical side, which will form the basis of the reconstruction of China, is growing closer and closer. The latter four countries are taking the fullest advantage of their opportunities, whereas apparently Great Britain is allowing her chance to go by default. . . . British stock in China is very low indeed."

It can be safely said that in those five days in Kunming there was not a factory, a school, a power-house, an institution, man or woman from whom he could learn of the life of the region and country, that he did not visit. Nor was the information-giving a one-way affair. On the evening before he left he was taken to the Yunnan University to address what he thought would be "a select party of about twenty professors and persons of literary eminence on the State of European politics". An old temple was the university assembly room. When Stafford arrived there were twelve hundred people in the room and an overflow outside. Stafford held forth here for an hour and a half. That ended their stay in Kunming and the next day they arrived in Chungking.

Chungking, of course, was the temporary capital of China and is situated in west China about six to seven hundred miles from Canton and Hong Kong in the south-east, and some nine hundred miles from Shanghai. It had, at this time, about a million inhabitants. Its remoteness from the great ports is an indication of the extent of the Japanese penetration into China, although a great deal of the occupation lay along the railway lines of communication and great stretches of the so-called occupied regions were controlled by the Chinese. Of course, at this time January 1940, there was a truce in the Chinese Civil War between the Nationalist Government and the Communists, in order to fight the Japanese. It was an uneasy truce in which all the problems which had given rise to the Civil War remained and both sides were without confidence in each other, in the validity of the truce, or their joint concentration of all forces on the external enemy.

No sooner had Stafford arrived in Chungking than he "unpacked hurriedly and was taken to call on Foreign Minister Wang." After Mr. Wang he left to call on the British Am-

bassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr. The two of them ranged over affairs at home and abroad and Stafford found that the British Ambassador agreed with his criticisms of the British Government's appeasement policy toward the Japanese. They discussed a proposal by Stafford of a visit to Sinkiang and Stafford found the Ambassador not only agreeing but keen that Stafford should return via America in the hope of being able to effect, or at least influence America in the direction of, a better co-ordinated policy between England, France and America towards aid for China.

On January 16th, Geoffrey Wilson was taken ill and had to go to hospital for a fortnight. Stafford continued with his interviews and discussions. First he discussed the military situation with General Chang and then the internal situation with Sun Fo, a son of Sun Yat-Sen, "father of the Chinese Republic." He learned of the existing methods of Government and as much as he could of the Kuomintang Party, which controlled the Government in all China where Chiang Kai-shek was the acknowledged leader. After his talk with Sun Fo, Stafford had his first interview with the Generalissimo. Of the latter he said

"He is a fine clean-looking man and is very impressive with his modesty and sincerity. He hardly spoke at all except to elucidate some point or to express approval of some idea. I gave him a long sketch of foreign policy of Great Britain as frankly as I could and I found that he had said to the British Ambassador very much what I had said to the Cabinet as to the danger of the German pact last summer. He is obviously of the opinion that communism is unsuitable for China at this stage and I agree with him. And I do not think that he is anxious to be too close to Russia, but he did not say anything directly on this point. He asked me about the Burma Road and whether I had any suggestions, and I then developed my ideas about a closer rapprochement with both Burma and India, especially the latter so far as immediate help was concerned."

The next day Stafford spent some time with the Industrial Co-operative people and learned more of the good work they were undoubtedly doing. Then came his first meeting with the Soviet Ambassador to China.

Says Stafford.

"I thought the Ambassador was an attractive young man and just occasionally he smiled and then he looked very sociable and friendly. He told me that he had had a telegram from Maskey about me and that he was therefore dealing with me very frankly as a friend of the

USSR I told him about the relations between Great Britain and Soviet Russia and the part that I had played and stressed my anxiety for the improvement of those relations. He was anxious to know whether I thought that there was any likelihood of a combination of Germany and England against Russia. I thought this a rather odd question but perhaps it was part of his frankness. I told him that the British Cabinet would probably like it once they could get rid of Hitler but that I did not think it would come off. He made enquiries of the views of all the various members of the Cabinet as to their feelings about Russia and I expect a long report will go to Moscow. To me much the most interesting part of the conversation was about Finland. I told him that many friends of Russia thought that she should have waited to get the re-adjustments that she wanted without copying the Nazi methods of aggression, and that I should like to know what he thought was the answer that should be given to those who accused the Russians of imperialism. However, when I asked him if he would tell me definitely what was the aim of the Russian Government as to this war he replied that they would under no circumstances annex or occupy any Finnish territory as they did not believe in that, but they would, when the Finns had a Government which really represented the interest of the people, enter into diplomatic negotiations with it and then they were quite certain that all the matters could be very quickly settled. I told him that if such a categorical statement were made publicly it would comfort a lot of people in England, China and India whom I had met, and who had been friends of the U.S.S.R. but who were more than puzzled by the Finnish war."

Then Stafford sounded him with regard to his proposed visit to Sinkiang and the possibility of a talk with some of the Russians at the frontier. He thought it was a good idea that a wire should be sent. That was to lead to big things. On another day he saw General Ho, the Minister of War and next-in-command of the army. He had two huge maps brought into the room with which to illustrate the dispositions of the armies and the regions occupied by the Japanese. His review confirmed that of General Chang, whom Stafford had seen earlier. The diary says

"The general was perfectly happy about the situation and said that the Chinese now had the initiative though they did not intend to make any frontal attacks since they had not the material with which to do it and it was too costly . . ."

On January 20th came the news that the Soviet Government had no objection to Stafford's proposed visit to Sinkiang. Again he talked with the Generalissimo, who wanted to hear of

Stafford's visits to the Chinese institutions and his opinions of their economy, the economic, industrial and agricultural developments which he had witnessed. The Generalissimo then asked him to stay for some months and make a complete tour of all the industries and then help him in planning their future! Or could he recommend anyone like himself for the job? Stafford said he would think about it.

Before leaving for Sinkiang Stafford went to Chengtu, and made this the centre from which he made visits into the surrounding country. Chengtu is a city in the middle of a huge plain spreading out fanwise to the north and covering an area of some 2,000 square miles. Of it he says "Chengtu is one of the most ideal spots on earth."

"The climate is never very cold, even in the severest times there is no frost and in the hottest summer it is always cool at night so that blankets are necessary. The soil is so fertile that they grow as many as three crops in the year and sometimes four. In about a fortnight's time the whole place is a mass of blossom and already (January) there are lots of Kai Wah out everywhere and on sale in the streets. Every kind of fruit can be grown including strawberries and the most wonderful peaches. There is practically no trouble from malaria. Add to all this that Chengtu is a real centre of culture and activity of all kinds and I don't see what anyone could want better."

He came back to Chungking and there his friend Geoffrey Wilson, after fifteen days in hospital, joined him again. Once more he saw the Soviet Ambassador. Stafford said of this interview

"I told him of the anti-Red scares circulating in America regarding the Russian control of China and my desire to counteract these by being able to describe from first-hand knowledge the complete Chinese control of Sinkiang, which he assured me existed and as to which he seemed quite anxious that I should make enquiries. He said that the Russians had absolutely no territorial ambitions in this direction. I then asked him about the rumours as to a Russo-Japanese Pact for the division of spheres of influence in China and he similarly assured me that this was nothing but Japanese propaganda and had no substance. He was very enquiring as to my views on the likelihood of British and American action towards Japan and also towards China. I raised the question of whether the Moscow people would care to meet me to discuss British foreign policy and he said he had not had any reply yet to his earlier query on this subject but would again telegraph Moscow, making the suggestion that

I could either fly by special plane to Moscow for a few hours talk or that they could come to Alma Ata and meet me there ”

Next to come his way was

“Mlle Cosmo who I gather as a communist in France has been very closely in touch with the communists here, especially the new 4th Route Army round Nanking, and appears to be in bad odour with the Kuomintang and therefore with the Government. She told us of the very violent suppression of communism which was still taking place in many parts, including the assassination of communist leaders, and she took a gloomy view of the possibility of maintaining Chinese unity or of organising the unity to defeat the Japs I think her views are somewhat biased, not unnaturally from her own experiences, and that the picture is not as black as she would paint it ”

And then

“This morning Peck came from the American Embassy and spent 1½ hours and I completed a memorandum for the Generalissimo on transport organisation from Haiphong ”

After that he went to the Generalissimo himself and there were Clark Kerr, Madame Chiang Kai-shek and Donald

“ The G asked me about my Chengtu experiences, about which I told him . He also said he had read my memo on gasoline and had passed it forward with instructions for it to be put into operation I gave him the one on Haiphong railway transport, and also promised him one on road transport by handcart I also dealt with the question of the co-ordination of agricultural research and the need for some organisation to put into operation the results of that research ”

The Generalissimo again renewed his appeal to Stafford to return to China after he had been home to England to influence British foreign policy, and to bring a team of young people with him. But Stafford would promise nothing more than “he would think about it”. Sinkiang was calling The Generalissimo and his wife thought he would be very cold and called in the tailor from the Industrial Co-operatives and had the friends measured for trousers and short coats thickly lined with silk waste. Within a few days the tailor fitted them up with “two most lovely blue silk-padded suits” On Sunday, February 4th, as Stafford and Geoffrey were busy packing for the journey to Sinkiang, Stafford received a message from the Soviet Embassy to the effect that a special plane would be waiting for him at Alma Ata (just over

the Soviet-Sinkiang border) to fly him direct to Moscow (3,000 miles) and then back to Urumchi. That meant about 8,000 miles travelling in seven days! So at last his persistent efforts to meet the Soviet leaders were rewarded.

Geoffrey Wilson writes that on February 6th, Stafford

"stepped into a German aeroplane wearing Madame's suit of rompers, his fu-lined Chinese gown, felt boots, a fu cap, and Don's scarf and walking stick. My garb was a little more assorted—Madame's rompers, my own socks, stockings and shoes, the Vice-Consul's heavy overcoat, the Consul's golf jacket, and no hat at all as I proposed to buy a fur one."

The first hop was to Chungtu. The second morning when they soared aloft, there, far away in the west, before them they could see a huge range of snow-covered mountains and nearer still a lower range sprinkled with snow and its peaks jutting through the clouds. Suddenly the clouds broke and soon they found themselves flying over fantastic country, narrow waterless river valleys, and over vast hills and, before they realised it, they were circling round a walled town and came down to the aerodrome on the bank of the Yellow River amidst magnificent hills. The town was Sucho. On the left of them were the high mountains bordering Tibet, on their right the seemingly endless stretches of sand of the Gobi desert.

Here they had to stay the night in the airport buildings. The Chinese Consul and his wife and son were on the same plane as Stafford and Geoffrey Wilson. All having dropped in unexpectedly, as it were, they had to make the best of the improvised accommodation. Mr. Wang, the manager, could provide. So in a room twenty feet square, warmed by an iron stove fixed in the middle of the room with an iron pipe running along the ceiling, and four beds down each side of the room, they looked around to see how best to arrange themselves for the night. It was all beautifully clean with a large rush mat on the floor, one table, one window, a map of the world in Russian on the wall and three coloured prints representing Chinese rural life. The outlook from the window was magnificent and while they gazed in admiration on the Tibetan mountains, they could think out how the Consul and his family could share the room with them. The problem was solved after much meditation by the lady and the boy going elsewhere while the men shared the room to the tuneful accompaniment of the champion snorer of the party—the Chinese Consul.

The Russian Douglas D.C.3 aeroplane was waiting for them

at Harri. It was a beautiful plane of the same pattern as the one in which they had begun their journey to India, yet faster. Now really began the journey over Sinkiang, the great highway province, a thousand miles from east to west, connecting China and the Soviet Union. Across it runs the most romantic road in the world through "incredibly beautiful mountains and desert". It is the famous "Silk Road", the oldest of caravan tracks, which had been in use immemorially when Columbus first discovered America. Stafford Cripps and Geoffrey Wilson were the first Englishmen, indeed the first white foreigners, to pass through this land since 1934. This highway is part of a long through-route linking up Alma Ata, capital of the Kazakstan Soviet Socialist Republic, with Chungking, capital of "Free China".

It was of special importance to Stafford that he should become acquainted with Sinkiang. There were so many rumours about it in Britain and America denying its existence as an independent state, and especially with regard to its relations with the Soviet Union, that he was anxious to see the situation for himself. The province, which is nearly twice the size of Germany, has a population of only four and a half million people. Was it an independent state or was it controlled by Russia or by Chungking? He would soon be able to answer these questions and much more. Of the journey by plane on that early February day of 1940, Stafford writes

"It was a most marvellous trip, with the high range of mountains first of all on our right to the north until we crossed them half way, when we skirted them on our left, flying quite close to the side of them, having the most wonderful view into and across them, while on the other side was a huge snow-covered plain bordered by another range that was just visible in the distance. As we approached Urumchi, fir trees began to appear on the northern slopes of the mountains, and in some places were thick enough to form forests. One range of mountains was almost a deep purple in colour on its northern slopes where it was not covered with snow, and the effect of this with the snow in the brilliant sunlight was indescribably beautiful. I think it was the best piece of mountain scenery I have ever seen and the whole journey through from Suchow made one feel that the desert space that separates Sinkiang from China is a very good reason for the lack of close contact of Sinkiang with the rest of China. Indeed it is a little difficult to see how until the coming of aeroplanes it can ever have been organically connected with China. . . "

But soon they were down from the contemplation of the



sublime scenery to the ridiculous acts of man. They had arrived at Urumchi. First they were told that they would have to stay there a day or two because of bad weather ahead. Then the fun really began. They sent their cards to the Governor and the Civil Governor and suggested their luggage need not be examined. But, oh dear no! The police were on the job and while they sat in the dining-room of the airport, drinking tea and eating fruit and yoghurt, the equivalent of the "gentlemen in blue" went through their luggage piece by piece. Every letter was unfolded, every piece of paper examined and some they took away to be translated. Then the Governor sent word he was too ill to meet them, but he had made arrangements for their accommodation in the town, and sent all the appropriate messages. Now says the diary.

" . The personnel of the airport is almost entirely Russian. This naturally gives the impression to the visitor that the Russians are very much in control of the situation, which is not the correct impression so far as other things are concerned. We had some talk while we were waiting to get into our hostel about affairs in Sinkiang, and were told that they were doing quite a lot in Chinese education with Russian as a second language, that they had a number of middle schools, a big normal school for which they are erecting a fine new building which we saw, and a university college with departments of all kinds, especially in science, and an agricultural research institute. We were also informed that there were a great many mineral resources in the province, but not yet developed for want of capital. . . There is as yet very little industrialisation and the chief products are wool, hides and skins, with raisins from Tulufan, saltpetre which has not yet been properly exploited, and silks, especially carpets from the south as well as wheat. Jade and gold are also found in the provinces. . . There were foreigners in many but not all of the departments in the province. All these are, of course, Russian. One appreciates the difficulties of approach from the Chinese side when one realises that it is impossible to get goods from the Russian border to Lanchow by road because a lorry would require to carry a full load of petrol to complete the journey and would have no space for any goods. It is, therefore, a geographical necessity for any technical development to take place from the Russian side and this is in fact what is happening. . . All the inhabitants here have fur caps, knee boots, sometimes of leather, but more often of felt, and sheepskin coats. There were few Chinese types, most of the people being considerably larger and of a more Mongol or Tartar appearance, though Mandarin Chinese is the generally spoke language. This place has the appearance of a town of

nomads We often see loaded camels going through the streets and a great number of pack ponies and donkeys In fact, one of the great differences from the Chinese towns we have seen is the small amount of human transport and the use of animals instead ”

At last, after days of waiting until the weather cleared, their plane took off for Alma Ata some five hundred miles away. From there they flew on to Tashkent and found that the snow had thawed, and that they were in the midst of a populated area where cultivation was intense. They stayed the night in Tashkent, went on to a place named Ajursal and once again they were in the regions of deep snow, and so it would be until they reached Moscow.

All the time as they flew westward the region became more and more populated until they reached the densely-populated district of Moscow itself. Michael Tichomirov, assistant head of the press department of the Foreign Office, was waiting at the aerodrome with a car to rush them off to an hotel

At last Stafford Cripps was in the place in which he wanted to be for so long, in Moscow, the Mecca of the revolutionaries from the ends of the earth, the capital of the Soviet Union, with the many-coloured onion-shaped domes of its hundreds of churches, its towers and minarets, its buildings old and new and its high-standing walled city of ancient palaces within the larger city, all deep in snow. But Stafford was pre-occupied with the purpose of his mission. From the outset, he was talking with Tichomirov, going over the ground he had already covered with the Soviet Ambassador in Chungking. He told of the things he wished to discuss with Molotov, of his thoughts about the invasion of Finland and the existing relations with Germany But above all, he wanted to discuss with Molotov the possibility of concerting action between Great Britain, U S A , Russia and France

Stafford crowded into the next day visits to the Moscow underground railway and an exhibition of Chinese and Western pictures. But all this was overshadowed by the fact that in the early evening he was to meet Molotov in the Kremlin Right on time, he arrived within the Kremlin gates, and was ushered into the Foreign Office of the Soviet Union Of this visit, Stafford tells his own story. He says

“These are magnificent offices, very up-to-date and most beautifully furnished and decorated, the best government offices I have seen anywhere in the world. I was not kept waiting any time at all and was

shown into Molotov's magnificent room where he and the interpreter were waiting. Unfortunately, the latter was a very bad interpreter and although he translated the general sense of our remarks, one lost all the fine points of personal expression. My general impression of Molotov was of an intelligent and extremely careful man who was not going to commit himself on anything until he had ample time to consider it in all its aspects. It was in consequence a very considerable job to get out of him any expression of opinion at all, especially on any point as to which he had not been fully prepared beforehand . . . "

Nevertheless, Stafford got out of this interview that which he had been seeking. He sums up the result thus

"It was quite clear that Molotov took the view that the British Government's policy towards Russia had never changed and had been throughout a hostile one and the Russian Government did not consider it worth while to enter into trade negotiations in that hostile atmosphere. He gave instances dating from last spring down to the present time as if they were all indistinguishable. He cited the recent case of the ship that had been stopped and the raid by the French Government on the offices of the Russian trade mission in Paris as showing that the French and English were both hostile to Russia at the present time. I told him I thought this undoubtedly was so since the Finnish war, and would continue to be so until after that incident was closed . . . He gave me an explanation as to the Russo-German pact, saying that they felt themselves obliged to enter into some agreement on the west in order to avoid the danger of being drawn into the war, and that the French and British missions quite clearly did not intend to make any reasonable arrangement. At the same time as the Germans changed their anti-Russian policy, Russia felt herself obliged for her own safety to enter into an agreement with Germany. I rather gathered from this part of his explanation that he intended to point out that the German agreement was not in any way an act hostile to Gt. Britain. I then asked him about the chances of some agreement either of a trade or a political nature being arrived at between Great Britain and Russia. He said that if at any time the British Government would adopt a friendly attitude towards Russia there would be no difficulty in coming to an arrangement, either on trade or political lines, but without this it would be impossible.

. . . I then told him about the disillusionment and misunderstanding among Russian sympathisers on the Finnish situation and gave him the suggested draft of a statement which might be put out explaining the Russian attitude. His immediate reaction was that it was quite unnecessary, but after some discussion and explanation, he said he would have the document translated and would consider it. . . . As regards

general Far Eastern policy, I asked him whether in his view it would be possible for Russia, Great Britain and America to concert a pro-Chinese policy, and it was to this that he replied that the question was one of which he had not been forewarned. I persisted in the question however, and he then asked me what British policy was as regards China, to which I replied that it was to help China as far as possible without raising too much hostility from Japan. To this he replied that Russia's attitude was well known, to help China defeat Japanese aggression, and he did not seem at all averse to the idea of some concerted policy between the three countries. I ended up with two final questions on the attitude of Russia, first towards India, and secondly towards Japan. As regards the first I asked if there was any possibility of what some people in England feared, i.e. intervention in India through Kashmir. At this he laughed and said it was obviously merely the ridiculous suggestion of some anti-Russia person and there was not the slightest possibility of any such thing happening. As regards Japan, I told him that a number of people in England were talking of the possibility of an agreement between Russia and Japan on the lines of dividing China into spheres of influence, an inner one for Russia and an outer one for Japan. He said that this suggestion was equally ridiculous and that there was no possibility of any such arrangement being made by Russia. After a few polite exchanges, the interview which had lasted nearly two hours was ended. The only thing he asked me to do was to try to make clear to people in England the real basis of Russian policy. He assured me that Russia was not at all unmindful of its friends and supporters in other countries and was most anxious to preserve their goodwill. "

Stafford thought that visit well worth while. It had confirmed his views on some things, enlightened him on others; it put him in good relations with the Soviet Government and strengthened his hands with regard to the policy he had been pursuing in England. And now for Chungking, Yokohama, the U.S.A. and home.

Early next morning Stafford and Geoffrey were on the way to Kuibishev. The weather was bad. Snow covered the earth. Visibility was poor and the plane had to fly low, rocking, swaying, bumping its way along. After four and a half hours they came down into deep snow on the airport at Kuibishev, snow so deep the plane could not taxi along at all. They were stuck. The temperature was down to zero and there they stayed for two and a half hours. They had been forced down by snow piling on the cockpit window and obscuring things so that the pilot was unable to see where he was going. At last with the aid of skis

passengers and pilot plodded their way to the hostel on the air-field. They learned another Russian expression which they promised never to forget, "Plokay pogada" (bad weather). They watched for a time a tractor ploughing the runway clear of snow. There was a biting wind and the temperature was far below zero. The day went by and still they remained there. The next morning they heard the aeroplane engine ticking over and hopes began to rise. Then they went into the aeroplane again, at about ten o'clock they were being towed ignominiously back to the starting point.

The next morning after cocoa, bread and three fried eggs each they got off in bright sunshine in a plane whose inside temperature fluctuated between twenty-two degrees of frost and eighty degrees F. They flew over the frozen Sea of Aral and an endless plain of snow to Tashkent. From Tashkent they went on to Ile. Hopes rose for a speedy departure but bad weather held them again. This time, however, it was not the snow but the thaw. The landing ground had been transformed into a sea of mud and the plane could not take off. At last they decided to travel the next stage by road. So Stafford sat in front of a twelve h.p. car with a tin of petrol between his legs, a dispatch case on his knees and behind him Geoffrey and another traveller, three suitcases, two boxes of food, two bottles of water, a typewriter, a large tin of petrol and other odds and ends, beginning a journey of twenty-five hours driving to the next station, suspicious of their luck but hopeful. Their driver was a swarthy Mongol dressed up in a huge sheep-skin coat. The road surface which had been hard was a mass of mud and thawing snow. The car looked all right from the outside. Its main defects were that it had no brakes, the accelerator stayed either right on or right off; the radiator boiled ceaselessly, the spare wheel was flat and there were no chains on the wheels. The driver knew little about driving and nothing about the construction of the car. Other defects were comparatively insignificant. Anticipating trouble from the boiling radiator the driver had equipped himself with a sardine tin, and whenever the travellers came within sight of water he would stop the car, rush off and fill it, and bring it back to empty into the radiator. Naturally, that did not lend speed to the journey. Plunging into a beautiful gorge everyone was too pre-occupied with the adventurous condition of the car, the L-driver and their position on a steep slippery hill really to admire the glories that were around them. At last, after Stafford had taken over the driving, the adventurous party reached a village where

a Russian mechanic accomplished a little repair work on the car, jumped into the driver's seat and sped them over the mountain top and down again into valleys piled with snow. The moon came up and lit up the lovely scene. Snow was falling and for hours they were alternately digging the car out of snow drifts and pushing it along the track. A train of pony carts loomed up in the moonlight. It was travelling in the opposite direction along the old caravan track but no help came in response to their appeals. The travellers were too busy with their own troubles to think about the moderns and their difficulties. And the moderns struggled on and at last they started to run down hill along a good surface. On their left reared up what looked like a great embankment of snow but as they neared it and the moon came out and shed its light upon the scene, they stopped and gazed. Before them lay the Sotomor Lake frozen solid. The pale green surface of the ice stretched out in an irregular pattern to the ranges of snow-covered mountains in the distance. With the soft moonlight on the mountains, the shadows in the valleys, the translucent atmosphere along the lake, the whole scene was indescribably beautiful and held them spellbound.

At last came Urumchi, thirteen days after they had left it, expecting to have done the journey in six! Here they found Hsia, from the Ministry of Communications, waiting for them. Here, too, Stafford had a long talk on the day of arrival with Mr Feng, the understudy of the Governor of Sinkiang, who was still too ill to see him. The next stage of the journey was uneventful. The car behaved itself and the road became easier to negotiate. They reached Tulufan, or Turfan, famous for its raisins and dried fruits.

"Tulufan," says the diary, "is probably one of the most prosperous towns in Sinkiang and owing to its efficient method of irrigation, including the underground method introduced a hundred years ago by General Lin Tse Hzu, is a paradise for fruit and vegetable growers and farmers. They grow and dry grapes, peaches and other fruits and also grow apples, pears and melons which are even better than those of Hami. These latter are stored in deep underground caves and are supposed to be at their best in the early part of the year. . . . Many of the streets of this town are covered with bamboo matting against the great heat of Summer when the temperature rises to 115 degrees. Snow is practically unknown and rain seldom falls. The height above sea level is only twenty-five feet. "

Pushing on to Chi Chou Ching they were entertained by the

local police for half an hour. Then on to Hami, where they found an aeroplane had been waiting a week for them. After waiting two days for their luggage to catch up with them they made a number of uneventful hops which brought them to Chungking, where all the principal people of the capital were agog to hear of their journey and their news.

The next day was, therefore, one of interviews with the British Ambassador, Clark Kerr, Hsia, White of *Time* and *Life*, Durdin of the *New York Times*, Dr. Want, and finally he finished in the evening with the Generalissimo, who, like all the others, was anxious to hear all that Stafford had to tell him of his mission. With the Generalissimo were General Chang, Wang and Hollington Tong. They travelled over familiar ground with the added information that the great journey gave them. The Generalissimo emphasised again that Great Britain should do something about the Burma railway. He discussed Stafford's memorandum on foreign advisers and once again asked Stafford to take charge of them.

Dr. Sun Fo also appealed to Stafford to take on this job, not only to effect the economic changes, but to influence the politics of the Generalissimo. The next day, after a farewell lunch with the Ambassador Kerr and his wife, Stafford and Geoffrey boarded a Douglas D.C 2, waved farewell to the assembled crowd of friends, soared into the sky and were away to Hong Kong.

In a few hours they landed in Kowloon and were soon installed in the luxurious Peninsula Hotel.

"The next day Mrs Selwyn-Clark, otherwise known as 'Red Hilda', came and took us off for lunch with Madame Sun Yat-Sen, where we met T. V. Soong, the editor of the *China Daily News*, and a couple of young Chinese who form the Committee of the China Defence League in Hong Kong."

They talked for a long time, except that Madame Sun Yat-Sen took very little part in it. She was very shy and retiring. All who were there were anti-Chiang Kai-shek and, with the exception of Soong, were pro-Communists. Stafford gathered that the objectives of the Chinese Communists

"are not really Communist at all, but are democratic, the abolition of feudalism, the cleaning up of the administration, and the intensification of the anti-Japanese drive."

At Hong Kong they boarded a steamer bound for Shanghai.

On the way they called at the island of Amoy under the control of Japan. At one time this place had a population of 170,000 but since the Japanese came it had dropped to 15,000. When the ship called, Stafford says

"The town this afternoon looked like the city of the dead and this ship last year called between air-raids and took on board some 2,000 refugees. It is some indication of the terror inspired in these people by the loathsome bestiality and senseless cruelty of the Japs of which the American Consul gave us some examples."

In three days they reached Shanghai. Without delay they boarded an aeroplane and after a 1,000-mile journey arrived in Tokio. They went straight to the British Embassy and, says Stafford

"the next day I had a talk with the Ambassador. He is very pro-Japanese and takes the view that nothing should be done to antagonise Japan until we know for certain whether we are going to fight Russia, as in such an event we should need to make an alliance with Japan."

From the British Embassy the visitors went to the house of Mr. Matsujima (whom they had met the previous night), to lunch in proper Japanese style.

"At the front door we removed our shoes and put on felt slippers. All the floors are made of very smoothly polished wood and are covered with fine matting, and the first room we were shown into for a cup of pre-lunch tea had in it no furniture at all with the exception of a table about 12 inches high with six cushions around it. The only decoration was one picture, one ornament and a bowl of flowers. And I understand that this type of furnishing is typical of a Japanese house. From that room we moved on into the dining room, similarly furnished but, as one is supposed to kneel at a Japanese table, and as our host has many foreign visitors, he has made the table slightly higher than normal so that they can get their legs underneath it if they want—and after a short time on our knees we did want! . . ."

Next they went to the Parliament House or the Diet. There Stafford met the Speaker along with the oldest member of the Social Mass Party. This was similar to the Labour Party in England, but had only thirty-four members in the Diet. It was mostly drawn from the working class and concentrated on domestic policy only, Stafford says.



"I was then taken into the diplomatic gallery in each house and after being shown the Imperial Drawing Room with the most lovely silk biocades and embroideied panels and also the budget room, which is very beautiful, we walked round the rest of the building and then I left . The whole building is very beautiful, done in grey marble and bronze and the two chambers are most convenient, comfortable and with good accoustics "

After the Diet there followed a visit to the American Ambassador Thus ended the visit to Tokio. Quickly they flew away to Formosa and then onward to Canton.

Since the Japanese occupation of Canton, the wealthy Chinese had left Huge areas were nothing more than a mass of ruins with no complete house left standing in what used to be the busiest part of the city, and a terrible sight it was. One-fifth of the area of the city had been bombed or burnt out and no attempt had been made to clear up the debris. Out of a city of a million inhabitants, nearly half fled when the Japs came Now they were trickling back, but the wealthy kept away.

From Canton the travellers made their way back to Hong Kong and once more were met by their friend Donald with the Governor of Hong Kong, and soon began rushing around to fix up their journey homewards by the Pan-American Airways As usual their luck held good They fixed up to go one day and that was not the day they could go So around Hong Kong they sped and paid a visit to Fanling some twenty-five miles away But the next day they did get away From Hong Kong they flew to the Philippines, on to Guam, and from Guam to Wake Island.

On March 29th, which is also the 28th, they hopped from Wake to Midway, another eleven hundred miles. On the way they crossed the International date line and pushed in a whole extra day to make up for the time they had lost! Onward they flew to Honolulu, landing at Pearl Harbour

Pearl Harbour! How ominous and tragic the name sounds to-day! Had our travellers—or their hosts—any premonitions of that oncoming disaster, the great final blasting event that with one mighty crash made certain that all the great nations of the earth would be at each other's throats? Not the slightest. On the day they arrived American ships of the line lay quietly in dock. The waters were still and the sun shone warm and pleasantly. Here even the rain is known as "liquid sunshine" The whole island lay before them as the island of the blessed. The flowering shrubs and trees were a blaze of colour. The African tulip tree

was in full bloom. The bougainvillæas and hibiscus were of every range of pale pink to orange and scarlet. There were blue plumbago, blue moonflowers, wild roses in abundance, and the gardens were full of orange and yellow lilies, and how green the trees and the grass! Why, here was a place to stay and let the mad world go ringing down its disastrous ways. So it seemed. But they could not stay. On they must fly to Los Angeles. Here the travellers stayed at the Biltmore Hotel and that same evening they dined with Charlie Chaplin and Mr and Mrs King Vidor. Of Chaplin, then working on his first "talkie" film, *The Great Dictator*, Stafford wrote

"At heart he is an anarchist and does not believe in any form of government and is very afraid of collectivisation. He is very doubtful of the benefits of machinery since the mechanisation of industry has destroyed craftsmanship which he believes lies at the root of man's self-expression. He does not think there is any substitute for earning one's living by the sweat of one's brow and he envisages the decline of civilisation with the increase of mechanisation. He dislikes the pretentiousness of wealth, especially in America, and believes that the increase of facilities of all kinds is sapping the virility of the people and making them less fit to develop a decent civilisation. . . His criterion of civilisation is that there should be plenty of 'fun' (he insists on this word rather than happiness) for all people. I thought him a very nice, simple, charming man and hope to see more of him."

The night passed and the morning came, and another aeroplane flew them off to El Paso on the Rio Grande at the junction of Texas, New Mexico and Mexico, and onward over the California and Arizona desert. It was much like the journey in North-West China. From El Paso they flew to Pittsburgh and on to Washington. Here they were met by the inevitable press conference.

Every hour of the succeeding days which Stafford spent in the States was fully occupied with interviews, meetings, conferences, in which he was spreading the light about the realities of the situation in the Far East and urging action. He talked with Benjamin Cohen in the Department of the Interior about his views on American action in China and what it ought to be; he met Stanley Hornbeck, the political adviser to the Secretary of State, whose analysis of British foreign policy in the Far East he found to be very similar to his own.

After the talk with Hornbeck he went to see Hull, a "tired old man". Next came talks with Jack Fisher and Gardner Jackson

concerning the affairs of the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organisations which enabled him to take the measure of the reactions of these labour organisations and their leaders to Roosevelt and to Britain. On to the Chinese Ambassador, from him to John L. Lewis, the Trade Union boss of the American miners, and on to Herbert Feis of the State Department to press for his support for financial aid to China.

Another day Stafford met Miss Frances Perkins of the Labour Department, Henry Wallace and Henry Carter, urging them to action on behalf of China. Then came a talk with Constantine Oumansky, the Soviet Ambassador. From him he passed on to Dexter White of the American Treasury, who spoke to the future Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain "about the ineptness of the British approach to America on financial matters" and informed him that

"the Americans did not like to be treated either as fools or children. They knew perfectly well what were the resources of Great Britain and although they would probably be prepared to give financial assistance they certainly would not do it until Great Britain had sold her foreign investments and realised their value "

After that little bit of "realpolitik" around the money bags came a long discussion with Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador.

On April 8th Stafford and Geoffrey flew to New York and were rushed off to a press conference. There were scores of journalists, some looking for "Crippsian indiscretions", some for information, and some to shoot off their own fireworks, thus:

"What about India?"

That was wide enough and big enough for anything. So the answer came:

"The Congress Party is determined to have self-government for India. The Congress is quite prepared to sign a Treaty with Britain providing stages of progress to that end, but Gandhi cannot hold the Congress in check indefinitely "

"Violence a possibility?"

"Gandhi says he will not start the non-co-operation programme until he can be sure it will be non-violent. but it is doubtful that he can be sure under the circumstances "

"How long can Gandhi hold his crowd back?"

"Perhaps till the Autumn."

"Much Russian influence?"

"No, this agitation is purely national "

"Has the British Government enough force to suppress violence?"

"Yes, at present "

"German influence there?"

"There is no room for it. Indian Nationalism is too strong "

"How's Mr Stalin?"

"I understand he's not well But I have no real information I was in Russia only 36 hours "

"Isn't that long enough for an Englishman to form an impression of anything?"

"That depends on circumstances "

So question and answer went on until he had covered almost every political and economic issue with which he had dealt in the course of his great journey. Stafford went on to the Council of Foreign Relations, who were mostly rich Republicans like Colonel Roosevelt and the former Secretary of State, Henry Stimson. The next day he visited Hillman of the Garment Workers' Union and Quill of the Transport Workers and then addressed the Foreign Policy Association of India. Now the last lap of the long journey was at hand

On April 12th, 1940, Stafford and Geoffrey watched the skyline of New York fade into the distance from the deck of the Italian ship *Rex*, a 54,000-ton vessel. Soon America and all its busy life was lost to view. They turned to make the acquaintance of their new accommodation and company which for the next seven days would be theirs. For the first time in months, they could really relax and rest, assimilate their experiences, prepare for the to-morrows. There was no place of call until they came to the "Pillars of Hercules" and turned into the harbour at Gibraltar. Here, under this towering fortified rock, standing as Britain's sentinel at the doorway of the Mediterranean, they stayed awhile, but as the sun set behind the Sierras, the *Rex* sailed away towards Naples, where they arrived the following day. Here Geoffrey Wilson left Stafford, to make his way back to England via Geneva. Stafford went on to Genoa and returned via Paris. From Paris, he travelled to London and on April 23rd, 1940, the family foregathered to celebrate his birthday and the fact that in 145 days the travellers had covered 45,107 miles by air, sea, rail and car, visited fourteen countries and seen the rulers of 1,300,000,000 of the world's population.

On the day of Stafford's arrival in London, the triumphant

invasion of Norway by the Nazi forces had reached its completion. The Nazi Armada was poised ready for its overwhelming onslaught on Belgium, Holland, France. The days of smug satisfaction and soporific utterances were at an end. No longer could Chamberlain lull the people with "Time is on our side," or with assurances that "Hitler has missed the bus". There was alarm in the camp, even in Parliament, for the enemy was at the door and the Government seemed not to know what to do about it.

Such was the situation when Stafford arrived. Such was the situation when he, the man without a party, resumed his place in the House of Commons. Hence, on that memorable day of May 7th, 1940, he was in his place in the House of Commons to take a principal part in finishing off the job to which he had set his hand when he launched his campaign for a "Popular Front Government", a "People's Government" to replace the Chamberlain Government. On that day, the Leader of the Opposition in a crowded House of Commons opened the attack on Chamberlain and his Government in a two-day debate on the disaster of Norway. In his prim, schoolmasterly, quiet way, the slim, bald-headed Clement Attlee began

"It is not Norway alone. Norway comes as the culmination of many other discontents. People are saying that those responsible for the conduct of affairs are men who have an almost uninterrupted career of failure . . . to win the war, we want different people at the helm from those who have led us into it."

And then the storm raged from all sides of the House. L. S. Amery, an old friend of Chamberlain and a leader of the Tory Party, crashed in

"We are fighting to-day for our life, for our liberty, for our all, we cannot go on being led as we are. . ."

In a voice of passion, he quoted the famous utterance Cromwell used on another fateful occasion:

"You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"

Here was drama of the first order. It went into the next day when Herbert Morrison announced to a House packed to the limit of its capacity that the Labour Party would divide the House on the question of confidence in the Government.

Chamberlain, enraged by the turn of events, called on his friends "to support us in the Lobby to-night"

Mr Winston Churchill, out of Cabinet loyalty, stormed to the defence of Chamberlain. Mr. Lloyd George in a devastating speech told Churchill not to turn himself into an air-raid shelter for Chamberlain and ended his speech with these words:

"There is nothing which can contribute more to victory in this war than that he (Chamberlain) should sacrifice the seals of office"

Now Stafford Cripps rose up from the back benches. He began

"This debate is the most momentous in the history of Parliament. It is constantly said that 'you must not attack the Government because it will endanger the country'. There are times when the only safety of the country is attack upon the Government, and it will be a grave dereliction of duty on the part of members of this House, if, being honestly convinced that it is necessary to challenge the issue, they take no steps to do it"

No one doubted for a single moment that if that were Stafford's conviction he would do it. He proceeded calmly:

"It is a perfectly trite and true saying that the onlookers often see most of the game, and there have been, especially in America, but in all neutral countries many very keen observers of the war in Europe. They are perhaps not so oppressed or encouraged by immediate events as are those who are here intimately taking part in day-to-day affairs.

"Upon certain points, I found, in contact with Americans of every sort and kind, almost unanimous agreement. Uniformly, they take the view that the efforts of this country have been ill-organised and have been permeated with the spirit of indecision and lack of boldness that seem to rise out of the failure to appreciate the extreme seriousness of the war situation. Of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer they were scathing in their criticism, and the question that was put to me more than any other while I was in America was, Why was it that the British people, if they desired to win this war, did not bring about a change of Government? Certainly they regard such a change as essential, and measure the necessity in weeks and in months."

Sir William Davison, a very good friend of Mr. Chamberlain, interrupted with the question. "What reasons did they give?"

That called forth the retort:

"If you will apply to Mr. Stimson he will give you the reason as regards the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and if you apply to many others they will give you the history from the time of Munich onward about the Prime Minister, and these are full and sufficient reasons "

Sir William wanted details and he called across the House.  
 "Let the House of Commons know what they are "  
 Stafford continued

"I am trying to inform the hon. gentleman and others what American opinion really is. They are certainly of the view, and this was made clear by the American press, that the prestige of this Government has suffered another serious blow by the events which have taken place in Norway. These criticisms were so markedly universal in America that it was absolutely impossible for anybody to overlook them. When one returns to this country after an absence of months, trying in the meantime to observe from a distance the development of events, one is struck by the depressing atmosphere which prevails in this country. In the Far East, for instance, in such a place as China, however difficult material matters may be for these people, one senses an intense feeling of hope and of life. In this country there seems to be no conviction. There is doubt and despondency widely expressed on all sides.

"No one will convince me that the spirit has gone out of the British people, but it is obvious that undecided and half-hearted leadership has created a sense of frustration in the people where bold leadership would give confidence and courage. In almost every department of Government the same fatal indecision and lack of realisation of the urgency of the situation seem to rule. Indeed, it is hardly possible to detect in some cases whether the Government have yet made up their mind that this country must be organised for victory, regardless of all costs. .

"Every honourable member today has a duty which I believe far transcends any party-loyalty; it is a duty to the people of the country as a whole. I never thought that I should be present in this House of Commons when in a moment so grave a Prime Minister would appeal upon personal grounds and personal friendship to the loyalty of the House of Commons. I trust those revealing sentences which he spoke will show that he is unfit to carry on the Government of this country."

Mr. Chamberlain's course as Prime Minister was run. Two days later Mr. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister in his stead, and the man without a party was called to go forth and complete an international task to which he had set his hand in the days when first the shadow of Hitler fell across the shores of England.

## CHAPTER 13

### AN INTERLUDE

AT this point it is necessary that we halt and take stock of the circumstances in which Stafford Cripps found himself in the dramatic days between his arrival in England on April 23rd and his departure for Russia on May 28th. From the moment he arrived in London to the time of his departure the days and nights were crowded with incidents, reports, interviews, discussions. Friend and foe alike were asking "What will Cripps do now?"

The day after his return to London Stafford saw Maisky and learned that he had not seen Halifax at all for three and a half months and there was intense anti-Russian feeling in all quarters. After Stafford's interview with Molotov, in which he had told the Russian Foreign Minister that nothing could be done to improve Anglo-Russian relations until the Finnish business was settled, Maisky received telegraphic instructions from Moscow to approach the British Government with terms for a Russo-Finnish settlement. These terms were more favourable to Finland than those eventually agreed upon, but the British Government would have nothing to do with them. A little later Maisky was instructed to make an approach as regards a trade agreement and it took three weeks to get an answer to this from the Government.

On the second day of Stafford's return the National Executive of the Labour Party had turned down by thirteen to two a resolution in favour of negotiations with Russia, Harold Laski and Ellen Wilkinson were the only two supporters. He found, therefore, that while the need for consummation of his policy in relation to the Soviet Union was greater than ever the forces arrayed against it were more formidable than when he had departed from England the previous November. Indeed, only when Hitler's forces came crashing along to the doorstep of England did they come round to the view that something must be done along the lines of Stafford's policy.

Meanwhile what was the position with regard to India? He quickly discovered that all he had feared before he left for India



had taken place. Instead of the Government making the declaration definitely committing them to grant Dominion Status to India at the end of the war, they had left it to the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, in accordance with the "man on the spot" theory. He was taking a violently suppressive attitude. There was no one in the Cabinet giving any consideration to the matter, "and as a consequence," says Stafford, "Winston, who supports the Viceroy, gets away with it." He at once sought to stay this course and began urging once again that the line of action he had advocated be taken lest Britain precipitate an upheaval in India while her hands were full with the war against Hitler. On May 1st he spent nearly two hours with a member of the India Office, discussing India, and came away extremely depressed about the whole outlook. Still, Cripps writes.

"The crucial decision to be taken by the Cabinet was whether they were going to try and hold India by methods of suppression or, by granting self-government, to attempt to arrive at a favourable treaty which would regulate the future relations of both countries."

On May 9th, when the fall of Chamberlain from the post of Prime Minister was certain, Cripps urged the India Conciliation group to wire Gandhi and advise him to hold his hand until the Government reconstruction had gone through, when Cripps would proceed to press his views upon the new Ministers.

On the day after his arrival in London, Stafford also visited the Chinese Ambassador, told him all about his talks with the Generalissimo and from that time began his campaign to secure co-operation between Britain, America, France and Russia with regard to aid for China, and especially to urge action by the British Government for the extension of the Burma-Yunnan Railway.

Cripps gave to the Foreign Office a long and detailed report on the whole of his visit to China and Sinkiang together with his recommendations. This report profoundly influenced the Government and it is probable that the decision to support the extension of the Burma-Yunnan Railway, taken some time afterwards, was a direct sequel.

In a lengthy speech to the "National Peace Council" on May 9th, Stafford reported on his journey through West China, Sinkiang, and Japan. The most important part of this speech was that which revealed his outlook on the relation of the powers in the Far East. He said.

"The people who today are helping China are Russia, the U S A and Great Britain. Russia has made no political demands upon China, very much to some people's surprise, and she has refused to give the Chinese Communists support of any kind against the National Government. The Generalissimo is extremely anxious lest at some future date, if the economic assistance becomes monopolised by Russia, political demands may follow. He is therefore anxious to substitute it as far as possible with help from the democracies of Great Britain and the U S A. If we want to see a democracy emerge we should maximise our assistance to China and make up our minds whether we want China to survive or not. Saying nice things is not going to assist China.

"There are two factors as regards the external position. The first is one which might result from an internal collapse and then I think Russia would be tempted to step into Western China simply for the sake of creating order on her frontiers. There would be a temptation to create spheres of influence for Russia. The greatest danger is that of hostilities breaking out between Great Britain and Russia. If that were to happen then inevitably there will be an Anglo-Japanese alliance. Either of these alliances will mean that China will be sacrificed. An Anglo-Japanese alliance would have very serious repercussions. I was given to understand by the State Department in Washington that if Great Britain double-crossed America in the Far East, the probability was that America would withdraw to Hawaii and come out of the Far East. The withdrawal of America would, of course, add another difficulty to the difficulties of the Chinese, who at the present time are getting a great assistance from the U S A. If Russia were to make an alliance with Japan, then I think it would inevitably be a part of that alliance that China would be divided between the two nations. So far as Japan is concerned, the U S A today is holding a sword of Damocles over the Japanese to prevent them from doing anything which is more objectionable. The sword is in two parts: the first is the embargo, and the second is the American Navy. They are undoubtedly powerful weapons, but even their effect will be largely diminished if there is no concerted action on the part of Great Britain and the U S A. But the U S A profoundly distrusts the policy of this country in the Far East, and a frank 'show-down' ought to be made on the part of this country. "

It is perfectly clear from this speech that his outlook on international affairs had little to do with his Socialism. It is the outlook of a British Liberal-Nationalist whose whole concern turns not upon the evolution of world society toward Socialism, but upon the relationship of Britain and British national interests toward other national interests. He was convinced that Britain's

national interests were challenged at this stage of history by Nazi Germany and Japan and not by Russia. Indeed he was convinced that British and Russian interests coincided and were complementary. His method of analysis had not changed since he analysed his first case at the Bar. It remained empirical, legalistic, concerned with political form and ideology and not the social content.

Nevertheless, here he was in England again, a leader without a party, the Member of Parliament for East Bristol. How did he stand in relation to the organised forces around him? In what direction should he steer? Certainly he sensed no great stirrings among the people, or the leaders in Parliament or out of it. Mr Chamberlain described the war as "the strangest of all wars". The Americans described those first nine months as "phoney". Mr. Churchill had the idea that this war would be like the last, had a great opinion of the Maginot Line, though not for purposes of passive, frozen defence, and in anticipation of long trench warfare, conceived a trench-digging machine—"White Rabbit No. 6".

He wrote:

"This mammoth mole could cut in loam a trench five feet deep and seven-and-a-half feet wide at half-a-mile an hour, involving the movement of eight-thousand tons of soil . . ."

But all this labour, requiring at every stage so many people to be convinced or persuaded, led to nothing. Deeply-rooted Conservatism was supreme in every institution and every party, combined with an insularity of outlook among the leaders that was appalling. A very different form of warfare was soon to descend upon Britain like an avalanche, sweeping all before it.

Yet all the leaders were taking a pride in "standing alone" when an enlightened and politically awakened people would have seen them legally tried for landing the country into so precarious a predicament. The Commander-in-Chief stood like a brave pugilistic nude bidding one and all, Germany and Russia too, to "come on". The Tory Party thought it could run the war without the co-operation of the Labour Party, and the Labour Party was criticising the Government and keeping its "Socialism" pure. There were mutterings of discontent in the mines and factories and widespread suspicion that something was wrong somewhere in high places, but nothing more than mutterings; meanwhile profiteers feathered their nests and war industries produced cigarette-lighters galore. None appeared conscious of

the imminence of disaster, or of the character of the war which had been unleashed and was about to shake the British Empire to its foundations. The Parliamentary parties suspended their differences until after the war and the Labour Party thought it would be unfair "to take advantage of the national crisis to fight for a Socialist method of prosecuting the war". The Communist Party said the war was a nasty imperialist business and they would try to persuade the workers to stop it. Some members even whispered that "they should transform the imperialist war into civil war".

Such was the state of the nation and of the parties and their leaders when Stafford arrived on April 23rd, just as the crashing armies of Hitler were sweeping through Denmark and Norway, and mightier forces were poised to sweep across Holland, Belgium, France and drive Britain's small expeditionary force on to the beaches of Dunkirk. When, the following day, he discussed the situation with "Nye" Bevan and George Strauss, the two M P s who were expelled from the Labour Party at the same time as he but were now reinstated, they thought he should continue his independent way and "agreed that it was impossible for left-wing Socialists to formulate any policy at the present time".

He at once renewed his efforts to mobilise opinion for an alternative Government. On May 2nd, Stafford met Lloyd George, the old maker and unmaker of governments. He found him

"most pessimistic and disturbed and generally disgruntled. I told him of my idea to publicise a draft alternative Cabinet somehow so as to get rid of the argument that there was no alternative. He agreed to this view and we discussed personnel. Rather to my surprise . . . Winston could not be P. M., and that it would have to be Halifax. I promised to let him see the list when I had completed it."

During the next two days he tried to get the big daily papers to publish his list for a new Cabinet but none would publish unless over his signature, which he thought undesirable and would militate against a fair consideration of the proposal. Finally, Cripps succeeded in getting the *Daily Mail* to publish it. Actually, Cripps went down to breakfast with Rothermere and arranged it. It had a profound effect and broke the idea of "no alternative" and contributed largely to the result of the debate in the House.

Five days later, Stafford had played his part in the debate

which forced Chamberlain to resign the Premiership. On May 11th, he wrote

"During the week-end of May 10th, the first announcement of the new War Cabinet came out and it was clear immediately Chamberlain made his farewell speech that he and Churchill were trying to force the Labour Party into a Cabinet which would retain all the reactionary elements. This was what I had prophesied for some years and had since become the accomplished fact, Churchill having chosen the leaders of various power groups in the House, irrespective of their qualifications for a War Cabinet."

Here was a predicament. The new Churchill Government still had Chamberlain and the "Men of Munich" entrenched within it. The Labour Party had made no fight about the composition of the Government, its concern for the "purity" of its Socialism notwithstanding.

About the composition of the new Government, Cripps was most outspoken. He said

"The first shock was the inclusion of Mr Neville Chamberlain. What led the leaders of the Party to agree to his retention? Why burden the new start with this sombre legacy? Why carry the symbols of defeat into what we all hope will be a victory government? This is not the clean break we all longed for. . . . The removal of Sir John Simon to the Woolsack and the House of Lords reduces to comparative impotency a personality identified with a deplorable episode in the destruction of the system of collective security, but the mass of the people will not appreciate the remoteness of the Woolsack and will think only of the fact that Sir John Simon is the chief spokesman of the government in the House of Lords."

"Mr Kingsley Wood, having failed with dire consequences to provide sufficient aircraft, is made Chancellor of the Exchequer, as though to emphasise the moral that outstanding failure in one important office is good ground for appointment to another."

"When we come to the new appointments our disappointment amounts to dismay. What conceivable reason was there for giving Mr Duff Cooper the Ministry of Information? Do we want to convince the world that we are determined to defend the worst aspects of Conservative reaction? As though to give point to this fear we found that Lord Lloyd had been chosen to be Secretary for the Colonies. Lord Lloyd is legitimately suspected of Fascist sympathies. . . ."

"As though to complete the tale the news then came through that Mr. Amery had been appointed Secretary of State for India. This was surely

the last post we wanted Mr Amery to be given      What impression does Mr Churchill expect his Government to make upon the world and especially neutral opinion?

" We cannot escape the conclusion that the leaders of the Labour Party have been badly worsted in the negotiations which have taken place over the reconstruction of the new Government . "

The entrance of the Labour Party into the Government also created a novel position in the House of Commons. Where was the Opposition? The Labour Party itself was conscious of the position and proposed to be in the Government and out of it; to be in the Coalition Government and play the role of "devil's advocate" by retaining its members on the Opposition benches and appearing to lead opposition to the Government. This was too much for Stafford and he sent a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons with a view to organising a real Opposition instead of a sham one

Stafford followed this with efforts to form an opposition group but there were no forces in the House of Commons that he could muster without the members of it having to face a break with the Labour Party.

The next day he went to Bristol to meet the Bristol East Labour Party and his agent, Herbert Rogers. At first they were anxious for Stafford to re-join the Labour Party, but after he had explained what he had been doing since he had last met with them, and that it would not have been possible for him to have made his journey to the East had he been in the Labour Party, or to play the role he had in bringing down the Chamberlain Government, they agreed by an overwhelming vote that it was not opportune for him to re-join so long as it was necessary to continue the struggle against the "Men of Munich" still in the Government. It was also necessary for him to remain independent until the Government's policy in relation to Russia, India, Burma and China had drastically changed

Nevertheless, Stafford was in an extraordinary and difficult position. His independent position had its advantages. It enabled him to exercise influence on individuals by personal contact and it left him free to undertake any specific task which could implement his policy in international affairs especially. But to have no army with which to wage the struggle for his ideas publicly and in Parliament left him in difficulties. It was disappointing too to find that a person or group of persons who to some degree shared his outlook were not free to co-operate with

him because they were in a party and each party had its own loyalties. The Labour Party had been thrust into a Coalition Government, not as its leader, but with *the Tory Party as the leader*, not with a programme including major features of its own programme, but with its "Socialism" relegated to the domestic refrigerator to keep it "pure" for discussion at a more convenient season. Stafford had wanted a Coalition Government free of Chamberlain and the "Men of Munich". They fell into the Coalition Government containing three effete politicians, who were not only enemies of Socialism but responsible for the extraordinary, isolated, and precarious position of the country. Nevertheless, despite these matters, the Labour Party had millions of people behind it and all attempts to set up rival Socialist parties had proved unavailing.

At the moment there was not even a group in Parliament which could be organised to further the changes he wished to see. There was no doubt about the things he wanted to do nor was he unclear in his estimate of the forces in conflict. Indeed only a few weeks ago when he was at the other side of the world he had set out his views on the course of events to a gathering of leaders and intellectuals in Chungking. He had spoken with a frankness and boldness that startled his hearers. Arriving back in England he saw no reason to modify what he then said.

I include here the speech he delivered at Chungking in February, 1940, for it may well be appraised as the greatest of his career:

"There is an experiment familiar to every student who has studied the most elementary electricity, wherein a magnet or a metal wire through which a current is passed is covered with a thin glass sheet upon which are sprinkled iron filings. When so placed on the glass each particle lies as it falls and there is no pattern or design in their position, they are a mass of unco-ordinated particles. If, however, the glass sheet is lightly tapped the particles will each take up an ordered position and in their totality they will display the pattern of the invisible lines of magnetic force, which are the true source of power in the magnet. I want to try and tap the glass plate of European politics so that you may see—not a series of unco-ordinated events—but the emergence of those lines of force which have in fact controlled the actions and happenings of the last nine years.

"I do not hold the view that the political development of the world is determined by the malevolence or the benevolence of a few individuals. Those individuals who often appear as powerful and decisive figures in

history are in my view the creation and personification of certain trends in the social, political and economic life of the different nations in which they occur. Naturally in times of transition when one class in a nation is taking over power from another class or is making the attempt to do so great opportunities occur for the uprising of prominent figures either personifying the losing struggle of the old ruling class or the winning struggle of the new ruling class

"Let me in fairness to the present British Government remind you that I have, ever since 1931, been a bitter opponent of their policies and of their European foreign policy in particular

"I must go back to that 1931, if I am to attempt to explain the present British and European policies

"During the early part of 1931 when Arthur Henderson was the British Foreign Secretary a very genuine attempt had been made by Great Britain to do three things. First to revive and reinforce the League of Nations and the idea of collective security in association with an active movement for world disarmament, second to attain a better understanding with Russia, the Government of which country at that time had the almost unanimous support of the British working-class movements; and third to moderate the harshness of the revenge which France and Great Britain had exacted from Germany after the last war. The general temper of politics in Europe and probably in the rest of the world was then better than at any time since 1919 and there seemed to be some prospect of a measure of disarmament and of a future free from major wars

"This, however, I must add as regards the imperialist aspect of British policy during the time of the Labour Government. That Government never faced up to the implications of an imperialist policy in its effect upon foreign policy. They were content to continue the old imperialist policy of Great Britain except that they attempted to administer imperialism in a more liberal and humanitarian way . . .

"When the change of Government came in Great Britain in 1931 a new train of very important international events began

"The new National Government though ostensibly representing all elements in the country was in fact overwhelmingly controlled by conservative and imperialist forces. The leaders were known to be extremely hostile to Russia and to be unsympathetic to the tendency towards socialism and communism in Germany and other European countries. The Conservatives for some years after 1917 had regarded the Russian Revolution as something unstable and which must inevitably fall within a few years; but when it had stood through years of difficulties and was obviously becoming more and more stable they became extremely alarmed at the prospect of the spread of the ideology of communism



through Germany and France to Great Britain itself. They were therefore prepared to do almost anything to build up protection for British capitalism and imperialism against the spread of this, to them, dangerous disease, which had already gained a considerable hold amongst the British working class. That basic attitude has been the determining factor in all British foreign policy since 1931 and up to September last year, and even to a large extent since that date.

"In the confident old days before 1914 there had really never been any doubt as to the direction of British foreign policy. First, foremost and always was the purpose of increasing the power and territory of Great Britain as the dominant nation in the world. It was also confident in its ability to appease its own working class by gradually rising standards earned by the exploitation of subject peoples all over the Empire and of backward or developing countries all over the world.

"After 1919 it had become apparent that revolution was again in the air in a very serious form, it was cropping up everywhere in the world. It had, moreover, become impossible in the post-war period to appease the British working class, which then numbered as unemployed over 3,000,000 of its members, and standards were falling fast instead of rising. Furthermore the colonial and Indian peoples had been re-awakened during the war to make very real demands for their rights and had turned the hitherto passive Empire into a continual source of trouble and embarrassment. The economic situation, too, had entirely changed. The intensive economic development throughout the world during the war had finally disposed of the theory that Great Britain was the workshop of the world. The advantage gained by the early invention and use of the steam engine in England had finally and forever disappeared, and competitors—very keen competitors—had arisen everywhere.

"The greatest enemy to British capitalism was thus the ideology of the Russian Revolution permanently embodied in the successful Government of Soviet Russia. To fight this ideology must mean hostility to Russia, even though such hostility might endanger British imperial connections in other parts of the world. The balance of power policy which had operated with comparative ease amongst States all of which were capitalist was found to have difficulties and dangers where one factor, and that a powerful one like Russia, had definitely to be ruled out as an ally owing to the danger that such an alliance would bring from the ideological point of view . . .

"One further point must be added and that is that the natural development of that very curious conception, the British Empire, had led to the passing of the Statute of Westminster shortly after the war by which the Dominions had been formally given an independent status and Southern Ireland had finally been freed from British control . . .

"For a time after the last war it was thought by many British imperialists that the interests of British imperialism might be well served by using the League of Nations as a defence for the post-war status quo both so far as France and England was concerned and a long drawn out attempt was made so to use it, which led to the destruction of the League as a factor of political power or importance in the world .

"Foreign policy became more and more opportunist, always hovering between a desire to destroy, or to protect themselves from, the Russian Revolution and a desire to maintain the integrity of the British Empire

"There is little doubt but that the Japanese appreciated this situation in 1931, knowing that they could utilise the anti-Russian feelings of the new British Government they chose the time of its accession to power for their first attack on Manchuria

"As is now well known the British Government delayed any kind of action against Japan and refused to co-operate with the United States of America in any practical policy to hold up the Japanese invasion of China This was not because of their pro-Japanese feelings but because of their anti-Russian obsession

"Their behaviour towards Germany after the accession to power of Hitler was just as remarkable Every kind of concession that had been refused to social-democratic, or even liberal, Germany was granted to the Nazis, not because the British Government feared Nazism or even because they liked it or approved its methods or policies but because they saw in it a real barrier against Bolshevism in the west

"The same policy was followed towards Italy in the Abyssinian war in spite of the obvious threat to British possessions in North Africa and to the vital sea route through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal .

"The Spanish Civil War demonstrated exactly the same policy The blatant intervention of Germany and Italy on the side of Fascism was not observed by the British Government who, contrary to every principle of international law, prevented the Spanish Government from equipping itself with defences against the Spanish rebels . . .

"France had appreciated the growing danger of Germany and had concluded but not ratified the Franco-Russian pact in which Czechoslovakia was the vital link between the two countries The Laval Government which was substantially Fascist in outlook had far more sympathy for German Nazism and Italian Fascism than for Russian Communism The Communist Party of France was very rapidly gaining strength and was well on the way to becoming the most powerful political party in the country It was largely due to the influence of Great Britain that France refused for so long to ratify the pact and then when ratified did nothing to carry it into effect, as too it was almost entirely

due to the attitude of Great Britain that the subsequent Popular Front Government in France under M. Blum refused to help the Spanish Government against its rebels, and thereby destroyed the possibility of that Government surviving for any length of time.

"It will thus be seen that throughout this period the major factor in European politics was the successive utilisation by Great Britain and to some extent by France as well, though largely as the result of Great Britain's lead, of various Fascist Governments to check the power and danger of the rise of Communism or Socialism through Russian or other influence in any other country. Japan was tacitly encouraged in the East, Germany in the west of Russia and Fascism was reinforced in Italy and Spain while the Popular Front Government was destroyed in France. All this despite the evident and growing danger to British Imperialism.

"I must for a few moments retrace my steps to deal with the position of Russia and Germany. Little need be said as to the latter since the whole German plan was exposed in Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, which I don't believe any Conservative leader discovered or read until 1939, any more than they did the stories of the atrocities in the German concentration camps.

"Hitler has steadily pursued his policy and he has been permitted to pursue it because he managed to persuade British Conservative statesmen that he was providing a bulwark against Bolshevism, exactly as he managed to delude the Conservative Austrians to the same effect. Now both have discovered that he is an undesirable kind of bulwark.

"The agreement at Munich forced upon an unwilling Czechoslovakia marked the final success of Hitler's anti-Red propaganda. It had enabled him to rearm with the tacit consent and active assistance of Great Britain, it had allowed him to annex Austria and so break his way into Southern Europe, it had destroyed Spain and the Popular Front Government of France, it has weakened and embarrassed Great Britain in the Mediterranean and the Far East, and finally at Munich it broke down the resistance to the wiping out of the strong salient of Czechoslovakia which was such a strategic menace to Germany.

"This disastrous history ought to be a lesson to liberal democrats not to be fooled in the future by anti-Red propaganda put forward by interested parties—Fascists and militarists in particular. There may be a lesson to be learnt from it in Far Eastern affairs.

"Munich and what followed had a vitally important, indeed, a decisive effect upon the turn of events in Europe. And here I must introduce Russia in more detail on to the stage. After Russian policy had turned from the idea of international revolution with the disappearance of Trotsky, the policy that was adopted was that of dealing with capitalist

countries as unavoidable neighbours and attempting to use their differences to the advantage of Russia and the proletarian revolution wherever it might spring up

"The policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries slowly developed though it never became quite complete or rigid. At the same time Russia, to whom peace was essential for her own industrial and social development, came round to the idea that the League of Nations might possibly be utilised to her advantage, as a keeper of the peace

"The trouble was that France and Great Britain refused to play the peace game because by so doing they would have been forced into a most unwilling partnership with Russia

"The complete and ignominious neglect of Russia at Munich in the vital matter of the integrity of Czechoslovakia severely shook the Russian belief in the possibility of allying themselves with the Western powers against the Nazi aggressors. Prague fell and with it Litvinov and his policy. Stalin and Molotov then took over and with a great deal of doubt and hesitation made one last effort to concert an anti-Nazi front. But by this time they had become so distrustful of the Governments of Great Britain and France that their conditions for such an alliance were amplified. They were no longer prepared to leave the matter to a mere gentlemen's agreement, especially upon the terms offered by Great Britain, namely that Great Britain and France should decide if and whether Russia were to come in to defend Poland

"Anyone with a grain of sense must have known that without Russia it was impossible for Poland to survive the onslaught of the German mechanised army and air force. However, this was disregarded and the guarantee was given.

"It is perhaps necessary to say a word about the Polish attitude to Russia. This, of course, is traditionally hostile, and after the Polish attack on Russia in 1920 and the taking then of Russian territory by Poland against the advice of all the allied statesmen the Poles became more frightened as the Russian strength grew

"Colonel Beck and the Polish Government represented the big land-owners of Poland and they feared Germany far less than Russia. Indeed no one was ever certain whether Colonel Beck had entered into a secret agreement with Germany or not! In spite of this there is little doubt that if Great Britain had made the inclusion of Russia a term of the guarantee of Poland, Poland would have been obliged to consent or else to have settled her difference with Germany by a surrender of Danzig and the corridor territory.

"This then was the condition in July 1939. I spare you any examination into the situation of the Balkan countries which were the centre of

every kind of pressure and intrigue from Italy, Germany, Russia and Great Britain and France

"It was then the failure of Britain to conclude a pact with Russia that made the Russo-German Pact and war inevitable

"It naturally followed that when Germany overran Poland and the Polish Government ran away to Roumania, Russia entered up to the Curzon line and a little beyond and occupied the entire Roumanian frontier, thus blocking Hitler from any expansion in that direction

"In spite, however, of the uneasy partnership of non-aggression and industrial assistance between Russia and Germany, Russia was not in the least content to consider her relations with Germany so stabilised as to negative any future danger of attack from that quarter, particularly if Germany were to be victorious in the war

"She therefore proceeded immediately to consolidate her position at the eastern end of the Baltic, where the protection of her naval base at Kronstadt and of Leningrad were the primary considerations. For this purpose she needed to hold the approaches into the Gulf of Finland, as anyone can see from an examination of the map

"With the smaller states she managed to make satisfactory agreements which may well be greatly to their benefit, but Finland was not prepared to enter into an arrangement which in my own view under all the circumstances was not unreasonable

"The demands were to exchange territory in Karelia—a very favourable exchange for Finland—which would set the Finnish frontier 50 miles instead of 20 from Leningrad and the cession of naval bases in the Gulf of Finland with a large payment in cash by Russia as a compensation to Finland. As Finland could never be a naval power, but might be a base for a foreign naval force such as the German, these demands seem reasonable to me as a basis for negotiations. They were, however, refused and Russia then, to my mind, committed the extreme folly of attacking Finland and pretending she was doing so at the request of the Finnish people

"In this relationship it is worth while remarking the swiftness with which all the anti-Red Governments of Europe have come to the assistance of Finland in one way or another. England, France and Italy have all offered or given them assistance. One would have been more impressed with the profession of their desire to save democracy and freedom—in Finland—if they had taken as rapid action and as favourable in the case of Austria, Czechoslovakia, Abyssinia, Albania, Spain, or even China, when these countries were attacked by Fascist aggression

"It only remains to say one word as to the curious war that is no war between Germany and the western democracies. I am certain the peoples of none of the countries want to fight, and they don't know

what they are fighting about or what good can possibly come out of it

"Unfortunately, to my mind, the view is now growing in England that the fault of the Treaty of Versailles is that it did not sufficiently smash up the old Germany and that this time Germany must be dismembered and destroyed. A more fatal and fatuous policy could hardly be conceived. So far as the British Government is concerned I have been unable to discover any clear idea whatever as to what is to come out of the war or what sort of peace with any guarantee for the future can ever be made.

"It is true to say that for capitalism and imperialism there is a menace in any form of progressive government whether liberal, socialist, or communist, whereas Fascism and militarism offer these economic systems their protection. Indeed any form of true democracy must threaten the vested interest of any ruling class or caste, and that is why such classes are ready to throw over democracy, and adopt Fascism to protect their own interests. It seems to me that it is the task of the younger generation in this as in other countries to work out forms of democracy that will enable them to play and control their economic life without depriving the common people of their individual freedom and their just rights.

"I believe that in the circumstances of this moment China has a great opportunity to make a distinguished advance along these lines of democratic development, and I trust that it may be the honour and pleasure, as it is the duty, of every one of you here present to combine with your struggle for China's freedom a determination to win justice and liberty under democratic forms for the teeming millions of your fellow countrymen. In that task I wish you and your country a great and victorious success."

On Monday, May 20th, 1940, the British Cabinet decided to invite Cripps to implement his policy in relation to Russia and go as an envoy to Moscow on behalf of the Government and explore the possibilities of reaching an agreement on any political or trade matters. On May 24th, he writes.

"Plans for Moscow were finalised and we start to-night for Poole, whence we fly to Athens."

## CHAPTER 14

### THE AMBASSADOR

ALTHOUGH his appointment as special envoy to Soviet Russia meant another hurried dislocation of Stafford's home life, which he felt acutely, he was extremely pleased that at last the political leaders of Britain had swung round to his point of view on the urgent necessity of improving relations between Britain and the Soviet Union. Of all the political leaders who could be relied upon to bring to fruition, if this were possible, the changed policy of the Government, none had better credentials or qualifications for the purpose.

The circumstances surrounding his appointment were extraordinary and the task he was given to do was beset with difficulties such as few other ambassadors had had to face. At no period since the November Revolution of 1917 had there been really friendly relations between the two countries. There had been uneasy periods of diplomatic "recognition" and trade relations, as between enemies agreeing upon a truce until a convenient moment for the resumption of violent hostilities. It took seven years for a British Government to bring itself to the point of sending its first Ambassador to Moscow. The very Prime Minister who now appointed Stafford to go to Moscow had waged an undeclared and unrelenting war of intervention against the Russian Revolution for several years and had never ceased to pour his contumely and hate upon its leaders until he saw that the requirements of power politics in relation to the defence of British Imperialism demanded an alliance against a more immediate threat to its power and domination. Almost every member of the existing Coalition Government had run Churchill a good second in their vituperation and hate against the Soviet regime. Even the Labour members of the Coalition had waged an unceasing ideological warfare against the Soviet Government, and the Labour Party Executive only a few weeks earlier, by thirteen votes to two, had opposed the sending of a mission to Moscow. The Chamberlain Government, with the support of the Labour Party, had been saved from making war on Russia by the refusal of Sweden to allow the passing of an

expeditionary force through her territory to aid the Finns against Russia. So antagonistic had been the attitude of every British Government to the Russian Revolution, there was not a single person within it or its predecessors who had the slightest comprehension, either of the scope and nature of the changes that had taken place in Russia, or its power either as a potential ally or enemy. There was not one who ever dreamed of her power as it proved to be when in subsequent months she "tore the guts out of the Nazi Army".

On the other hand the Soviet Government viewed every action of the British Government with suspicion, and was sceptical of the vacillating "goodwill" of the British Labour Movement and especially of its leaders. In the first stages of the Russian Revolution, when social revolution was developing in all the countries of Europe and not one capitalist Government gave the Soviet Government recognition as a state power, it appealed to the working class everywhere to overthrow their capitalist Governments and thus extend the frontiers of its revolution. When the war of intervention was defeated and the revolution in Europe ebbed, it won recognition of its state power, and entered into uneasy relations with all the Governments that had been involved in the intervention war. Deeply suspicious of all of them it pursued a policy of coming to terms with all and preventing another wholesale combination against itself. When the Nazis came to power, the Soviet Government recognised that two major enemies, openly declaring their intention to wage war upon the Soviet Union, stood poised to strike in the East and the West when it would become strategically and tactically convenient for them so to do. From that time her policy aimed at securing a collective peace and defence system of all countries threatened by the new powers. To this end a whole series of non-aggression pacts were built up, including pacts with France and Czechoslovakia. Throughout this period the British Government had refused to pursue a policy of collective security, and had double-crossed France and the League of Nations by making a Naval Pact with Hitler in 1935, in violation of agreements with France and the League of Nations. France tore up her pact with the Soviet Union and, conjointly with Britain, tore up her pact with Czechoslovakia and made a gift of that country to Hitler. Britain had reduced the League of Nations to a memory of good intentions, and, by the Munich pact with Hitler, left the Soviet Government high and dry with its collective peace system in ruins. From that moment Soviet



Russia resumed its pre-Hitler policy, and regarded itself surrounded by enemies with as little reason to have confidence in one as the other. Viewing all governments thus, she regarded everyone with the deepest suspicion and was concerned only with lengthening the "breathing space" before the inevitable war would fall upon her. Convinced, even when Britain sent her delegation and Military Mission, that neither Britain nor France was seriously intent on making an alliance and accepting its obligations, she made the pact with Hitler to the consternation of the rest. Indifferent to the outcry from the Governments that had double-crossed her previously and left her isolated, she promptly proceeded to use the new relationship between the powers to strengthen her defence in depth by advancing into Poland after the Germans had shattered the military resistance of the Poles and the Polish Government had fled the country; absorbing the border states into the Soviet Union; shattering the Finnish military preparation for co-operation in the attack from the West, be it led by Germany or Britain or France. In anticipation of the war which she knew must come when Hitler decided the time, she was now prepared to accept the Cripps Mission, in spite of the recent threat of Britain and France to make war upon her through Finland, and the intense outburst of hate from their Governments and leaders of the Labour Movement in both countries. This did not mean that the Soviet leaders believed that the unrelenting class-hatred which had marked the attitude of the British Governments toward her for twenty-three years had suddenly been replaced by the spirit of friendship. They regarded the desire for "improved" relations to be a long-delayed recognition that in the war against Hitler and all he represented the interests of the British Empire, indeed its preservation, coincided at this stage of history with the preservation of the Soviet Union. Here was the basis for realistic agreements between "fellow travellers" in difficulties but with little confidence or real friendship between them.

In these circumstances the wisdom of the choice of Stafford Cripps as the envoy of the British Government was obvious. His personal record in politics was one of friendship for the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union. He would be welcomed on that account, but that did not mean that the Soviet Government had any confidence in the British Government. They would act cautiously and suspiciously toward it, judging it by its deeds rather than its words. Such was the prevailing "atmosphere" and such was the background of Anglo-Soviet relations when

Sir Stafford Cripps stepped into an aeroplane and flew to Athens en route to Moscow as special envoy of His Majesty's Britannic Government, on May 28th, 1940

As he crossed the English Channel and flew along towards Italy (who was waiting to strike at demoralised France) the armies of the Allies were being encircled and smashed on the fields of Flanders, and Belgium and Holland were being swept by the Nazi avalanche. While he was flying, the Soviet Government informed the British Government that they would not negotiate with anyone who was not of ambassadorial rank. It was significant that since January of 1940, the then British Ambassador, Sir William Seeds, had been "on leave", i.e. withdrawn in fact while leaving his coat-tails in Moscow, to be picked up again if expedient or to be severed when the rupture became official. He had come home in preparation for the official rupture, should Britain join with Finland in war against Russia as well as Germany. That was a reminder of the kind of relations that had immediately preceded the new decision. So Stafford had to wait in Athens until the British Government transformed his position from that of "special envoy" to that of Ambassador.

He lingered there but a few days, then flew on to Sofia. On the way, while the plane flew high over the Balkan mountains, it was struck by lightning and sent hurtling from a great height. Pilot and passengers were thrown from their seats as the plane overturned and only the ingenuity of the pilot, in scrambling back into the upturned seat and regaining control of the machine, saved one and all from certain death.

After calling on the British Ambassadors in Bulgaria and Roumania he flew onwards to Moscow. He was met at the Moscow aerodrome the day preceding the King's Birthday by the entire staff of the British Embassy, and the Protocol Chief, Vladimir Barkoff, on behalf of the Soviet Government. The next day Premier Molotov, as he then was, made an unusual gesture. Stafford's credentials had not yet arrived and therefore he was not yet officially the Ambassador. Nevertheless, Molotov remembered that it was the King's Birthday, and as a gesture of goodwill personally left his card at the British Embassy.

Here began one of the most trying experiences of Cripps' career. Accustomed to a life of intense activity, quick movement and response to his wishes, he now learned all about the tedium of waiting on events catching up with him, and what it meant to live as foreigner in a foreign land, unable to get to grips with

the work he wanted to do, and to be outside the main streams of life. Knowing nothing of the language of the country, he could not mix with the people. The Embassy itself was just one large house isolated by the nature of the relations which had existed between Britain and Russia for so long and which still existed.

The Embassy building was a huge nineteenth-century house with a grand staircase and hall, huge lofty rooms, great doorways and doors, Persian and Chinese carpets, tapestry-covered wooden chairs, rooms of Louis XIV furniture, and the whole place gasping for a breath of twentieth-century aid and ideas on house equipment and decoration. Stafford's study appalled him. He wrote to his wife, Isobel

"My study downstairs, which has three full-length life-size (or much larger) portraits of royalty, an old ugly Turkish carpet and rather decayed red-silk walls and a dark ceiling and some nondescript furniture spotted about, looks too awful and I haven't yet been able to think of anything that can be done to make it liveable in. Its only merit is that it has doors opening out on to a terrace overlooking the little garden with a tennis court (hard gravel and sand) at the bottom and behind the garages, etc."

But the front of the house, with its balcony over the porch, faced both the street running parallel with the Moscow river and the Kremlin with its beautiful old red brick towered walls standing high before him. That was a view of which he would never tire. Weathered by centuries of sun, rain, snow and wind, the Kremlin was still well-preserved to stand for centuries. He would see it in every phase of its beauty, rich and warm in the midday sun, softening to every shade of pink and red in the evening light, and standing sharply silhouetted against the exciting skyline of Moscow nights.

Less than six months ago he had passed within the Kremlin walls to see Premier Molotov. But on that occasion it was mid-winter, the snow was deep and it was night as he made that quick call, talked for two hours, sped out again and away. There was no time then to look at the ancient chapels and churches and palaces which the Czars of dead generations had left behind them. Perhaps one day soon he would spend a longer time in this historic place and really see it from within.

Meanwhile he must settle within the big house and see what he could do to make it feel a little more like "home". So he moved things around, threw some things out and rearranged the furniture he couldn't throw out, discovered an old H.M.V.

radio which could at least pick up the local stations and provide some music, bought some new vases more suitable to the place, and flowers to put in some of them. There were twenty-seven people who formed the technical staff of the Embassy, i.e., people from England, and fifty people employed by them, servants, gardener, chauffeurs, maids, men-servants. He had to get to know them all and organise some social life. One of the first things, therefore, was to throw a party for the staff. That was easy enough and went off well. But to get to know the rest, whose language he did not speak, was more difficult. He must brush up on the French language. No sooner decided than arranged. He secured a teacher of French and, like the Potter girls and his grandmother before him, systematically "swotted" French. It would prove invaluable.

But the putting of the house in order was another job he found couldn't be done in five minutes. One day he wrote to Isobel almost in despair

"I have dragged the three hopelessly impossible (though very beautiful) blue Chinese carpets out of the pink and white drawing room and put two of them in the dining room where they look bad but not *so* bad. In the drawing room I have put the pink and white carpet (a nice one) out of the dining room and arranged all the chairs etc. around the edge leaving the carpet uncovered, except for one table uncovered in the middle of the room. I must somehow try to make the place look a little presentable."

But there was a dacha in the forest outside Moscow, where in the summer months it would be very pleasant. He wrote one day of his first visit there

"I drove out to my dacha in the forest about 30 mins. from here. It's a nice log house with another large one in a compound with a tennis court and a bit of garden and lots of trees. The furniture is very scratched and ugly but is quite adequate and there are 4 bedrooms and two bathrooms, a long dining room and a small sitting room and servants' quarters. We went for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour's walk in the forest which is flat but quite nice, mostly spruce and silver birch—smallish trees with open spaces between with grass but not many flowers of any sort! One has to get accustomed to the fact that wherever one goes two secret police are always within about ten yards. Walking, swimming, skiing, whatever it is they are always there—silent, and one pretends they aren't there. The only thing to do is to disregard them completely. They are quite nice and

most helpful if anything untowards occurs I shall try and go to the dacha sometimes to get the sanity of nature and the exercise . . .”

He was a stranger in a strange land. The Russians must have laughed heartily when they heard about the “secret” police who haunted him continuously, they were so “secret” that he and everybody in the locality could see them as they followed at “ten yards distance” or riding in a following vehicle. Of course they wouldn’t converse with him for they did not know English and he didn’t know Russian. So silence would be the rule even in their “helpfulness”. But he was good-tempered about it and nicknamed them his “Y.M.C.A. boys”. At first he and the French Ambassador could exchange visits and talk freely with one another about the politics of the day, but soon that had to stop for France went down under the Nazi hammer and his French colleague, M Labonne, who arrived the same day as Stafford, went into retirement after the capitulation. It was rather an anomalous situation as Labonne was anti-Pétain but remained technically the representative of the French Government. Cripps liked Labonne and went to see him from time to time.

When first Stafford arrived he had the impression that negotiations were soon to get into their stride and he would be extraordinarily busy, at least until they were completed. That was a wrong impression. In the first days he met Molotov and Lozovsky, the Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs. This was the first time he had met the latter and it was pleasant for him because Lozovsky spoke English well. It was he who, with Tomsy, the leader of the Russian Trade Unions, and J. T. Murphy of the English Shop Stewards, formed the committee which launched the Red International of Trade Unions. He succeeded Tomsy in the leadership of the Russian Unions. He is a good linguist and learned English in those years of the Trade Union International. He was a man who *could* talk if he would, but, as press correspondents learned, knew how to be charming without saying one word of significance and of “news value”. Molotov Stafford had met before on that memorable night in January after his arrival by air from Sinkiang. He had formed the impression then that this Russian of the Russians was a man who would never answer any question impromptu or discuss anything “off the record”. He must “receive notice of the question” as Ministers in the British Parliament say. And that was true for all occasions that are “official” and when meeting

people outside the confraternity of the blessed, i.e., the ranks of the Communist Party. Within the ranks of his own people, Molotov is a man of "wit and wisdom", cultured and erudite, a lover of the theatre, of literature and the arts, and a sportsman as well. It was not until the 28th June that Stafford was able to present his credentials to the President of the Soviet Union (Michael Kalinin). Kalinin was an old man with a remarkable record of service as a Bolshevik workman and leader. He was a friend of Stalin when Stalin was a youth just beginning his political career in the Caucasus. Until his death in 1948, he was possibly the most endeared man of the Union, the universal father of the people.

After the credential ceremony was over, Stafford could then begin his visits to other Ambassadors and receive them at the British Embassy. Early in July he met Stalin for the first time. It was a formal meeting, too formal for the two men to do more than register distant impressions of each other. This was the first meeting of Stalin with a foreign plenipotentiary since he received Ribbentrop in 1939. Although Stafford put many questions to him concerning Soviet foreign policy, Stalin was too conscious of the existing relationship of the Soviets to the rest of the world, particularly Germany and Japan, to give the kind of answers Stafford wanted. Considering the political climate he must be content that the meeting had taken place at all and wait for better weather. But waiting is not an easy job. There was not enough work to keep him really busy, and no man hates idleness so much as Stafford. One Sunday he took five of the staff, the secretaries and a Councillor from the French Embassy to dine at an Agricultural Exhibition. He says

"It was a really marvellous evening, exactly right in temperature, a delicious gentle breeze and the most lovely sunset about nine o'clock as we sat down, in a balcony of the restaurant overlooking the exhibition, for our dinner. Gradually the place was lit up under the most velvety purple sky imaginable. We hadn't time to see anything much in the exhibition. We did go round the Far Eastern pavilion which was very interesting and informative. All the products, agricultural, furs, etc, etc, are exhibited and statistics given. I want as soon as I get a chance to go and see the animals, hares, dogs, camels, cattle, pigs, sheep, etc which are on exhibit here. There is any amount to see, the difficulty is to get the time when one can get out and to get someone to go out with."

But that was not what he wanted. He loved the wonders of nature, but he wanted the busy rush of the affairs of men and

nations, the human associations that brought news of the world, of the war and home, and to be in the battle

One day he secured a new friend—"a big leggy ten-months-old Airedale" whom he promptly called "Joe". This nearly led to diplomatic complications, for when his wife sent her "Greetings to Joe" she had to think again and write "Greetings to Joe Airedale", lest it be assumed the greetings were for "Joe" Stalin. "Joe" had come up from the country, never been in a car or heard the noises of the town and was a little nervous at first. But soon he and Stafford were great friends and were hardly seen apart. Every morning they would take a turn around the garden for half an hour or so.

Writing to his youngest daughter, Peggy, Stafford says:

"I find my dog Joe a great companion though he is a bit of a tie and he has always to be with me or practically always he is now just behind my chair where he sits all day while I am working. If I have people here then he comes and sits on the leather sofa by me with his head on my lap! and when anyone strange comes he barks loudly (but not for long) at them so as to warn me of their approach . . ."

Later on as the autumn days approach he writes again to her and describes his day. He says

"A much brighter morning with a warm sun but now it's clouding over again. However we had one full hour's walk this morning and it was a bright invigorating autumn morning and Joe was in very good form indeed. I think he likes the cold weather better. You notice that most of my life now seems taken up with Joe. Well that is my only company by day and night and so I make the most of it and I think it would be quite intolerable here if it weren't for Joe!"

Another day, Cripps reports the arrival of two Ministers from the Baltic countries. "This gives us a little variety," he records:

"and company which is good for me and Joe! The latter has been very friendly. The last few days he has started to lose his fear and to walk about and back as if he were Ambassador and I were his valet! He is most cheerful and fit. He never leaves me wherever I go (except to the Kremlin where he is not allowed, or out to dinner parties) . . ."

So the friendship between Stafford and Joe grew day by day. Joe became the confidant who understood his moods and the difficulties of his isolation, his anxieties as to what was happening

in England, his nostalgic sorrow at parting with "Goodfellows" which had been his home for twenty years, and his fears as he waited for news of his wife Isobel's and daughters Theresa and Peggy's long journey across Canada and the Pacific Ocean to come to Moscow through the back door of Asia.

One day he gave a dinner party for two ex-Ministers from the Baltic provinces, Preston from Kovno and Gallienne from Tallinn. There were about ten visitors in all. Of this gathering he wrote in a letter:

"The universal hymn of hate whenever a few Englishmen meet together against the Russians makes me rather depressed and cross. Most of them have had associations with White Russians and the whole tradition and bias of the Foreign Office and diplomatic service is violently and unreasoningly anti-Russian. There is every reason to criticise a great deal of what they do—they do it in 'Asiatic' ways which are not our ways and which are often cruel and undesirable ways. Their methods very often differ hardly at all from the Tsarist methods, in fact they are Russian methods! Their lack of organisation, their way of doing things or neglecting business is all of it quite devastating at times, but in spite of all that, one can either look upon them as people broadly groping after something which is in the right direction or as wicked and malevolent destroyers of world civilisation. It is as the latter that these people regard them. The worst interpretation is put on every act they perform, the gloomiest prognostications are made as to their dishonesty and cruelty, etc , etc , and, as I say, it all makes me a bit cross and depressed. It is this atmosphere which has made it impossible ever to have any reasonable agreement between a Conservative Government in Great Britain and Russia. Acts that were overlooked in the Tsarist regime are emphasised and magnified as cruelties etc in this one. I should not object if there had always been an equal condemnation of methods. There hasn't and it is purely a political consideration as to whether the methods are overlooked or condemned. It is all so dishonest and so disgustingly self-righteous. . . "

He proceeded to give his own impression and understanding of the developments of the Russian Revolution both sympathetic and revealing, although derived from afar and without any attempt to understand the theories of the Bolsheviks or to make an intimate acquaintance with the inner life of the Soviet Union. He makes sweeping generalisations on insufficient data, brings to bear on the situation an outlook greatly influenced by his own idealism and social environment, but he is sympathetic and willing to be friendly. Indeed, from every point of view, the



mission he had undertaken, the power relations in the world with Britain fighting for its existence, his hopes for the future reshaping of the world, made this friendly appreciation necessary. So he continued his letter

"You can imagine that in this atmosphere I find it rather trying. I made a great effort to maintain, as I always tried to do, an objective view of the situation. This regime certainly suffers from a very great many most grave defects. Partly due to inherent characteristics of the people, partly due to external circumstances and perhaps partly inherent in every form of dictatorship.

"The Russians have never been consistent plodding workers, nor have they ever been good organisers and they are not either now, though they may in the future win through to better standards in both.

"The war atmosphere, which has now lasted many years, has compelled them to direct energy and organisation from civil to military spheres. The civil production and standards have suffered.

"The means of transport are ill-organised and insufficient even for ordinary requirements, with vast military movements always going on, the transport and distribution of civilian supplies suffers greatly.

"The organisation of agriculture which has so far defeated every government in the world in vast territories like these has not yet achieved success. The great experiment of collectivisation as against peasant ownership has not been determined as yet in favour of collectivisation in this country. But then transport and distribution difficulties are so great that it means great waste, and there are quite inadequate means of preserving or marketing surpluses.

"If to all these difficulties you add the government of secret police and spies which is the only method for a dictatorship, then in such a country as this with a people of this kind, apt to intrigue and brought up in 'underground' revolutionary activities, you get perpetual change of personnel and 'liquidation' of many of the more intelligent people, creating new difficulties of organisation.

"Yet despite all these difficulties and drawbacks the machine turns ponderously on. There are great queues outside every shop for hours sometimes, but all the people look healthy and well-fed (much more so here than in—say a Lancashire industrial town). The clothing situation is very bad and people are dressed in the oldest things—and yet few if any suffer from cold. Transport and production are ill-organised and yet the army, air force and navy constantly grow in strength and effectiveness. There are shortages all the time somewhere of some goods, sometimes grave and serious shortages, yet a large export of commodities is carried out . . .

"It all reminds me a little of China, such excellent intentions and plans, but just enough of the careless disregard for time and for action to spoil them or to hinder very greatly their effect. But that is the Russian temperament, and it's going to be a very long time before that is overcome."

"So we arrive at the question. Can this Russia, somewhat tired and exhausted after the enormous effort of the revolution, get over its natural propensity to sleep with the present incentives to keep awake?"

"Stalin and his fellow workers, but Stalin first and foremost, is making a tremendous effort to stimulate activity. His methods have been very many of them excessively cruel by our standards, others have been attempts to substitute some other form of competition or instigation for the profit motive. He is working with about the most difficult material possible both because of the natural characteristics of the people, the far-flung continent over which he has to operate, and the urgent need for concentrating on building up defences against Germany and Japan."

"Faced with a similar problem, are there any other methods? Could any one of us face them better or as well? Or should we throw in our hand and declare it all hopeless?"

"This reminds me again of China. When I made many suggestions of re-organisation to Chiang Kai shek and he asked me to take on the job of re-organisation in China, it sounded a marvellous opportunity, but then Madame Chiang and Donald both raised the question—How are you going to get the things done? And they advised me after I got back not to attempt it as all my efforts would be defeated by the characteristic difficulties of the Chinese people. In fact they must work out their own salvation in their own way. It is the same with Russia, I feel, and I am certain that a whole host of things have happened and will happen that I and others will regard with horror and intense dislike. They are happening now. I dislike the whole atmosphere—but if Stalin were to ask me tomorrow for advice (which he won't do!) what should I say about it?"

Cripps wrote like this after some three months of his Moscow isolation: an impressionistic narration resulting from the impact of Moscow and the Russian leaders upon the man of Christian Socialist ideals, the trained lawyer of capitalist Britain, the experimental scientist, the expert administrator from a country that had begun its industrialisation several hundred years earlier. Hence his estimate of the cultural levels of the Russian people, their carelessness of time, their backwardness in organisation, the collectivisation of agriculture, has for its yardstick the high levels of industrial society and the ideals of Christian Socialism. The

result, here, as in China, was a mixture of despair, hope and faith

He concluded his letter

"I am more than ever convinced of the undesirability of dictatorship and totalitarian regimes, but also more than ever convinced that some better forms of democracy must be invented if we are to prove democracy the right form of government—not for some ruling class—but for the people as a whole. They (the Russians) have taken on an immensely great and difficult task and each little forward step is something upon which they can congratulate themselves, then failures are the opportunity for our sympathy and help, which we cannot give if we insist on calling a pathless desert a broad and macadamed highway. Viewed in this objective light we can perhaps be a bit more charitable about the moles in their eyes and a little more conscious of the beams in our own political eyes."

In the middle of September he met a fellow-lawyer named Vyshinsky. The latter had just been appointed chief assistant to Molotov. For nearly two hours they argued about the English seizure of the Baltic gold. He said of this meeting

"I liked him both in looks and in conversation. He is a trained lawyer and has a good brain, I should think. We started by mutual compliments on each other's careers as lawyers! It all went very smoothly and pleasantly though our expressed views were 100 per cent divergent. I shall try and keep a close and continuous contact with him as, at present at any rate, he talks and discusses matters in a much freer way than Molotov and there is much more feeling of friendly contact with some realities."

By this time, too, he was meeting other Ambassadors more frequently and things became more lively in a variety of ways. One Sunday he went to the Stadium in Moscow with 90,000 to watch a Moscow football team play a Bulgarian team. He enjoyed it so much he went again, this time to see the famous Dynamo footballers play the Bulgars. Here he met the Belgian and Yugoslav Ministers. Then the American Ambassador made a call. In these days Stafford did not go to the theatres. He was waiting until his wife arrived and then together they would sample what Moscow had to give in this form of art. Another week and she would be with him! He was greatly excited and all his private thoughts were occupied with her arrival. Meanwhile it was the end of September, and he still wrote:

"There is no development of any sort in our relations with the Soviet Government and we are waiting to see how the new German-Japanese-Italian alliance will affect them. Not favourably to us I feel for the present at any rate."

So the days slipped by. And there came the day when his wife Isobel and two daughters, Peggy and Theresa, were arriving. That was a great day indeed and Stafford fussed about the Embassy in the mood of the schoolboy at the end of school term packing his bags for the holidays. The night before he had given Joe a "wash and brush-up". To-day he dashed out to the botanical gardens to buy flowers. Dahlias and chrysanthemums were all he could get at this time of the year and he made a goodly display of them. Then he got the news that the train was five hours late, but at last, at one-thirty a.m. it arrived and everyone was too excited to notice the chill of the night. There was Joe, too, looking his best in the car at the station, but a bit alarmed by the female invasion. The staff waited up to greet them and there they were taking supper until three a.m., a happy family united again.

The female family invasion changed the whole atmosphere of the Embassy. It became more like home. His "chief consultant" and partner in affection, Isobel, was there. Now he could get through his work more quickly and more easily than ever.

The arrival of the Cripps family was an augury of better days. It coincided with a stir in diplomatic activity. The next day Stafford saw Molotov and Lozovsky and got permission to evacuate all the British subjects from the Baltic provinces via Vladivostock. The Foreign Office in London at last began to talk with the Russians about the situation in the Far East, and things were beginning to move in South-Eastern Europe. There were important changes in the British Cabinet and, says Stafford:

"They have 'noticed' the changes with—I think—pleasure and some degree of hopefulness. I rubbed them in yesterday to Vyshinsky!"

Then in the middle of October he wrote:

"Yesterday I saw Mikoyan and we at last started 'Trade Negotiations.' . . . There is obviously a complete change in outlook due to Germany's occupation of Roumania which has upset these people very much following on the Japanese alliance. Everything for us is much easier and the Press is more sympathetic. May it last!"

Contrary to expectation Germany did not follow up her conquests beyond the Atlantic coast and invade Britain. On October 20th, Mussolini attacked Greece and in the same month Hitler marched into Roumania, which brought the Nazi armies to the border of Bessarabia, now a part of the Soviet Union. The Soviet had never recognised the seizure of this province by Roumania, which the latter took as a gift from the Versailles Conference of 1919. After the signing of the German-Soviet Pact in 1939 the Soviet Union forced Roumania to return Bessarabia to Russia, not only as a rightful restoration of stolen territory, but as part of a strategical plan of defence against the coming war of the Nazis against Russia.

The occupation of Roumania by the Nazi Army was therefore a reminder of the approaching hour when the war would roll over her frontiers. Hence the change of "atmosphere" in the Soviet Foreign Office, and the timeliness of proposals which Stafford made at this juncture on behalf of the British Government.

At this time Stafford also started trade negotiations with Mikoyan, and with Vyshinsky negotiated the evacuation of British nationals from the Baltic States.

Hardly had Stafford presented his proposals to the Soviet Government than the British seized thirteen more ships which had previously formed part of the Baltic merchant fleet. The Soviets claimed that these ships belonged to them. The view of the British Government was that they were Baltic ships and the question to be resolved was whether the Russian occupation deprived their owners of their rights in them. Another problem arose over Russian participation in a Danubian Conference called by the Nazis. The Nazis had no right to call such a conference of the "Danubian Powers", of whom, under the Treaty, the British were one, and thus the British Government objected to Russia recognising such an illegal conference.

It appeared to the Soviet Government that the voice of Stafford Cripps in Moscow was completely out of tune with that of his Government in London. A cold spell set in around the British Embassy in Moscow and Stafford had more time on his hands again. For the first time he went with Isobel to see the Russian ballet—"A very lovely and a great enjoyment"—at the Bolshoi Theatre. At the end of October he wrote.

"The diplomatic struggle is growing in intensity and is tending more and more to orient itself around Russia as she remains the great un-

certain factor in the situation. There is no doubt her sympathies are with Greece and with Turkey—for very practical Russian reasons—but whether and what that will mean it is impossible to say.”

Direct conversation about agreements had ceased. Stafford was dependent for his “news” on B.B.C. bulletins, whatever arrived in the mail, and what he could gather from what he calls the “Club”, an assembly of colleagues in the Embassy, and the gatherings of the various foreign Ambassadors whose news was derived from similar sources to his own. Describing this collective source of opinion in a letter he says:

“We have of course a mass of gossip all of which is interesting—from various angles—and much of which is amusing—like all gossip, because it deals with personalities. By means of it, testing it out, evaluating and weighing you can get a ‘hunch’ this way or that as to how things are going but there is a very strong natural tendency for one to adopt an attitude of one of the two extremes. You either wish-think yourself into an attitude by taking all the favourable bits of news and gossip or else you do precisely the opposite and everything looks inevitably blacker and blacker. And of course, as you only discuss these matters with known friends, that is discuss them freely and openly, you tend to react on one another and make each confirm the others pre-existing view—a sort of ‘mutual admiration club’ effect! One has to try to be objective even quite outside one’s own personal likes and dislikes and that is a very difficult thing, but naturally the value of one’s judgement depends upon how far one succeeds. . .”

He had really to wait on events, and big events too. But no doubt these atmospherics had their influence upon him. In the midst of this waiting for a turn in the tide of affairs, there came the great anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. On the 6th November, Cripps attended the Revolutionary Anniversary meeting in the Bolshoi Theatre (Lady Cripps was in bed, at the Embassy, with a chill). There were present the heads of the Government, Party and Soviet leaders from the various institutions, leaders of industry, the Trade Unions, the Co-operatives. The meeting was followed by a magnificent concert which went on into the early hours of the morning and was the prelude to the great march-past and display in the Red Square on the “day of the Revolution”. That, he said,

“ . . . was an amazing day of brilliant sun and cloudless blue sky, and it was a most impressive review. I liked the march past of the people which followed the military parade, when hundreds of thousands

steamed past with every kind of banner and device on sticks. It really gave one an idea of masses. But we came to the conclusion that it wasn't as inspiring as the Durham Gala Day, because one felt it lacked the spontaneity and was too much a Government-organised affair!"

To the people of the West, the name "Red Square" has a political connotation, but it had that name long before there were any "Reds", for the Russian words for "Red Square" also mean "Beautiful Square". Flanked by the lovely Kremlin wall, with its towered gateways and turrets, its flower garden of graves where the revolutionaries of yester-years lie buried, with Lenin's tomb of vari-coloured marble standing in the middle—an admirable platform from which orators can address the hundreds of thousands who on these days fill its spaciousness—its beauty is unrivalled. At one end, through which the demonstrators flow, stands the Museum of the Revolution. At the other, past which the masses go out of the square and return to their districts of Moscow, stands the quaint many-coloured Church of St. Basil, dating back to the Middle Ages. Once the Czars had a monopoly of this Square, and their Governments organised there only military parades and executions.

The celebrations had just passed when a diplomatic bomb-shell dropped into the "Club". Molotov went to Berlin to a conference with Hitler. Stafford made a note.

"I have listened to a great deal of speculation as to Molotov's actions and intentions, but the truth is that no one knows at the moment what, if anything, it all means. I had nearly 2½ hours with Vyshinsky on Monday evening and made a very strong protest to him against Molotov's un-neutral behaviour, and also pointed out that we must assume the visit amounted to a rejection of our proposals unless I had the assurance to the contrary, which I only got in a very ridiculous form, i.e. that Molotov's visit had nothing to do with their relations to us. It was only a return of Ribbentrop's visit etc etc."

Still, nothing happened. Neither Stafford nor anyone else could get past the "speculation stage" about what had happened in Berlin. The atmosphere was very unpleasant. As if to make things worse for him, a few days later he was startled to indignation, but this time it was not by the Russians. His trade proposals to the Soviet Government had been made in secrecy to keep the Germans from knowing anything about them. Suddenly, while at breakfast one morning, he heard them being

broadcast by the B.B.C.! It seemed to him that every step he had made in Moscow to create better relations with the Soviet Government, with a view to bringing them into the same camp as ourselves, had been followed promptly by some stupid counteraction on the part of the Government at home. He wrote a long personal letter to Halifax telling him that: "It isn't any good my remaining in the circumstances the announcement created." There was no doubt about his anger. He thought the British Government had played straight into the hands of the Germans. Irritated by isolation and the bungling of affairs at home, he was unhappy "Perhaps after Christmas," he thought, "we shall wake up to another bout of political activity."

Christmas news was not so encouraging to him as he had hoped. So the Cripps family settled down to a happy Christmas party at the Embassy. The Embassies had their "seasons". The Russian winter, uninfluenced by the Russian Government, had settled in. Deep snow was everywhere. The coloured domes of the churches of Moscow and all its towers and minarets, its squares and great highways, were now a glistening white. The Cripps' went to the dacha in the woods and tried walking in the forest garden. Then after a while Stafford says: "We went for a promenade round the village looking very miserable wading through deep snow . . ." But he kept up his routine of an early-morning walk with Joe, although Joe "was a bit miserable too as his toes kept getting so cold that he limped on them and I had to keep stopping to give them a rub . . ."

At the end of the second week in January it was evident that neither his protests about Molotov going to Berlin, nor his formal politeness, nor anything else in the diplomatic armoury had induced the Russians to alter their course. In his diary he made a remarkable suggestion; perhaps it was a "hunch" derived from his conversation with the diplomatic club, but he wrote

"At the moment these people seem more sphinx-like than ever and I doubt if even the Germans know what they are thinking! There are indications of something being on the tapis with Japan, I think an attempt to encourage Japan to go to war with America and so get Japan defeated and that danger out of the way!"

If the subsequent decision of the Japanese to strike at America and Britain was really due to Russian inspiration history will record it as a master stroke of Russian diplomacy. He added:



"They really are very realistic and intelligent politicians from the point of view of the national interests of Russia for the present. The supreme test will be if they can survive the whole war without coming into it or only come in when their victory is certain!"

A week later, he wrote.

"Things point in the direction of something being concluded in an attempt no doubt by the Russians to destroy the Japanese danger through the agency of the Anglo-American Far Eastern fleets! That is to say to drive Japan towards the south and into war with America. That is sound policy for the Russians to protect themselves in the East!"

At the beginning of April he saw signs that the Russo-German political clash was coming nearer.

"Everyone is wondering what Hitler will do—whether he will turn against the Balkans or this country or try the invasion of England. The general opinion is that time is turning against him now and that he will have to decide by the beginning of June at the very latest—but probably he will do so long before then and we may find ourselves en route for the Urals or Siberia!"

By the middle of the month Russia and Japan had signed a non-aggression pact after the visit of Matsuoka to Rome and Berlin. This was variously appraised. Goebbels declared that it signalled "to the world that four great powers were now in full and irresistible alignment." The Russians said nothing like that but they deemed it of such importance that Stalin came personally with Molotov and Voroshilov to the station to bid farewell to Matsuoka. In Britain and America the pact was interpreted in the Goebbels manner, and it was generally believed that Russia had thrown in her lot with the aggressor powers. Stafford did not accept this view. He said:

"I regard the Japanese Pact as anti-German since its only object can be to protect the Russian Eastern frontiers in the event of an attack on the west by Germany. . . . The place is full of rumours of German attacks. . . . It is sufficiently serious to cause people to start discussing evacuation plans. . . .

"I can't yet make up my mind except to the effect that there is a state of tension here which may have grave results—or may not in the end!"

I have decided to try and see Molotov to ask him about the Russian attitude in an indirect way."

Molotov refused to see Stafford. He therefore saw Vyshinsky and put in a stiff written statement to Molotov, which Molotov ignored. Whatever confidence the Soviet Government might have had in Stafford personally, they did not believe in the British Government. Stafford may have had the "voice of Jacob" but they had no doubt about the hands of the British Government being "the hands of Esau". But of what was really going to happen he was still in doubt.

On the last day of April he says

"I still think there won't be any war now but there is no doubt a danger of it and everyone is talking about it, not only amongst the diplomats but amongst the Russians as well. I expect these people will be able to do enough appeasing to avoid it—if Hitler lets them."

The after-thought is appropriate, for there comes a time when diplomacy is of no avail in the affairs of the world. Powers can use diplomacy to negotiate concessions of territory, economic and political agreements, but they cannot negotiate each other out of existence. Hitler wanted more than "lebensraum". He wanted the destruction of the Soviet regime and that could be settled only by the arbitrament of war! The die was already cast. Diplomacy had already assumed the role of hiding that fact. Stafford was thinking in terms of diplomacy as the deciding factor, watching for the breakdown.

However, by May 6th, something definite appeared among the rumours. He says

"The political atmosphere is most confused here at the moment as Schulenberg (the German Ambassador) says he hasn't seen and doesn't want to see the Kremlin people and that they can send for him if they want to talk to him—at the same time the Germans are denying any possibility of attacking Russia, while in Bucharest they are saying it is all arranged for mid-June! Then it is said (through chauffeurs' gossip!) that Schulenberg is packing to leave for good and is very depressed about things. . ."

A few days later he thought the situation was clearer. Stalin, in addition to his other functions, had become Prime Minister, in place of Molotov, and the Belgian, Norwegian and Yugoslav missions had been told to close down and leave.

A day or two later, Hess dropped from the skies into England. What did that mean?

Stafford's isolation, and his complete inability at this stage of affairs to make contact with the Russian leaders, was landing

him into the fog of the "Club" and a depression bordering on cynicism. The telegrams he received added to it. At the end of May he was still of the opinion that the Germans and the Russians would make another agreement, but he was not so sure that they were going to get the opportunity. The Bucharest report lingered in his mind. The taking-over by Stalin of the leading position in the Soviet State might have a meaning other than the preparation for surrender to Germany. Nor did the attitude of the German Ambassador appear to be one signifying cordiality between the two Governments.

Stafford arranged for his wife and daughter Theresa to go to Sweden, and began preparations for the evacuation of the Embassy. He was becoming convinced that zero hour was approaching and undiplomatic deeds were on the way and were very near. On June 2nd, a telegram arrived asking him to fly home for consultation with the Government. Evidently they also felt, and possibly already knew, that the next great turning point in the history of the Second World War was at hand.

On Wednesday, June 11th, 1941, Stafford Cripps, with his wife, arrived "unexpectedly" in England by aeroplane, convinced that the break would come in the middle of that month. On the fateful day of 22nd June, 1941, all uncertainty, even in the realm of diplomacy, was at an end. On that day M. Molotov, Vice-Premier of the Soviet Union and its Foreign Commissar, broadcast to the people of the Soviet Union:

"Today, at four o'clock in the morning, without giving any reason to the Soviet Government and without a declaration of war, German forces attacked our country, invaded our frontiers in many places, and raided our towns of Zhitomir, Kiev, Sebastopol, and several others. More than 200 people were killed and wounded. . . This unheard-of attack is without example in the history of civilised nations. The attack on our country has been made in spite of the fact that there is a non-aggression pact between Germany and the U.S.S.R. which has been conscientiously kept in every detail. Now that the attack on the Soviet Union has taken place the Soviet Government has given our forces the following order: Beat back the enemy's invasion and do not allow the enemy forces to hold the territory of our country . . ."

The same day, before the nine o'clock news, the British Prime Minister made a broadcast statement. He rose to the occasion. Never was he more clearly spokesman of the most keenly felt of British emotions. British hearers thrilled with pride even in the midst of the deep horrors at this extension of the war, to hear the

British Prime Minister associating the country so closely with their new allies. Making a firm declaration of policy, the Prime Minister said

"I have to make a declaration but can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing. Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid. . . . We have offered to the Soviet Government any technical assistance which is in our power and which is likely to be of service to them. . . . I will say, if Hitler imagines that his attack upon Soviet Russia will cause the slightest division of aim or slackening of effort in the great democracies, who are resolved on his doom, he is greatly mistaken. "

Thus at one fell swoop, massively tragic as it may have been, all the obstacles to an alliance of Britain and Soviet Russia, for which Stafford Cripps had been patiently yet persistently striving in the years preceding the calamity, were swept aside. Allies in fact in a life and death struggle of immense dimensions, there would be no difficulties standing in the way of legally and diplomatically tying up the alliance with the seals of the Governments. Stafford was publicly acclaimed for the services he had rendered. When Churchill addressed the House of Commons on the course he had taken in his broadcast, he said:

"It was this assessment of impending events that caused me to ask His Majesty's Ambassador in Moscow to return to this country for consultation. I felt that his experience and his advice would be invaluable to us at such a time, and so it has proved. The House and the country are deeply indebted to my hon. and learned friend, the member for East Bristol—if I may give him for a moment his Parliamentary, rather than his diplomatic, description—for work done under conditions of the utmost difficulty. For the reasons I have given, he was unable to conclude those pacts or agreements which are dear to the diplomatist's heart, although today they enjoy but a brief butterfly life. Yet it is clear that, by his influence, and by his example, my hon. and learned friend has shown to the Soviet Union the fundamental desire of His Majesty's Government to maintain our relations upon a normal footing. When he returns to his post, he will be able, with his marked ability, to advise and direct the help which it is the declared intention of His Majesty's Government to give to the Soviet Union at the present time."

On the 24th June, 1941, Stafford received the following from the Lord Privy Seal's secretary

"SIR,

"I write to inform you that at the Prime Minister's request the King has been pleased to approve that you be sworn of His Majesty's most honourable Privy Council "

And there came a voice from the years ago, from the retiring Lord Chancellor It said

"MY DEAR STAFFORD CRIPPS,

"May one who has always regarded himself as a stout friend of yours take the liberty of warmly congratulating you on your success as an Ambassador in these very serious times I don't believe anyone in this land could have done the job as well as you have

"I am about to retire and that is really why I want to say a kindly word to you before I go, for I shall always look back on the days when we struggled together with great pleasure and am still full of gratitude for your help. This then is a voice from the past Good luck to you!

"Ever yours sincerely,

"MAUGHAM "

The Labour Party leaders were not quite sure what to say The Communist Party decided that Stafford was not so bad after all and promptly acclaimed the war as a righteous war against Fascism. They didn't say it was so from the beginning, for Stalin had not yet said that. One day he would, and did But there was another man, lying seriously ill, whom at the earliest moment after his arrival in England he rushed to see. Lord Parmoor, his father, was near the end of his journey He also said: "Well done," to Stafford and was well pleased with his son. It was their last meeting. On June 28th, 1941, Cripps was again on his way to Moscow to consummate the alliance for which he had striven so long, and which life had now thrust upon Great Britain and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, despite all efforts to keep them apart.

## THE JOB COMPLETED

WHEN Stafford Cripps was appointed Britain's Ambassador to the Soviet Union it was in an hour of crisis in the course of the Second World War. The armies of Germany were crashing westward at tremendous speed and with overwhelming power. France was being overrun and the small British expeditionary force was being driven off the continent of Europe. The relations between Britain and the Soviet Union were frigid. Britain was on the verge of isolation, soon to be left alone to stand against the savage power which had set out to conquer the world. To such a pass had Britain's statesmen of the inter-war years, including those in the Government who had appointed Stafford, brought her that she had barely a friend in the world; even America, standing behind the counter of the war-market, had demanded ready cash for her aid. She was still in the "cash and carry" period preceding Lend-Lease.

A new stage of the world war had now begun, and it should not be ignored that in the course of this new phase of the war, not one power came into it voluntarily and formed an alliance against the Fascists because they loved their allies, or had the same ideals. Had it been possible for the Soviet Union, after the treacherous betrayal by Britain and France of Czechoslovakia, to keep out of the war, she would have done so. Had the Japanese not attacked the U.S.A., the latter would have continued to look on from afar, until the Fascists had jeopardised their interests and challenged their existence by some other attack. The dissembling of the old "peace system" had been carried to its completion with every state governed by its particular class interests and outlook, narrow, nationalistic, and conservative. The new alliances thrust upon the powers were marriages of convenience and not of love, the converging of the battle for existence and not a fundamental accord in aim and purpose. They would say the same things, but not mean the same things. Stalin would not become a Churchill, nor Churchill a Roosevelt. Within the framework of the alliances all the old clash of interests would be still there. All the old prejudices, suspicions, fears, distorted visions, conservative habits, pursuit of independent aims under cover of the common interests, would

continue to operate under the umbrella of idealistic charters, grand slogans and cloudy dreams of a victorious peace. So profoundly would these forces be at work that there would be no common pooling of resources, only aid to one another within limits; no common strategy, each calculating what it could do at the minimum cost to itself and speculating where each would be in relation to the other in the outcome.

Nevertheless, whatever the contradictory interests, evaluations, or outlook, they would accommodate each other under the pressure and challenge of their enemies. Mr. Churchill would see to it that the diatribe he had written against Stalin in his book of portraits would be left out of the war-time edition. Stalin would toast his "war-time friend" and watch him carefully. Such was the character of the period beginning when Stafford Cripps returned to Moscow to open a new chapter in his career as Ambassador of His Britannic Majesty.

Gone now, at least for a while, were the isolation and frigidity which had marked his earlier period. Having flown by British plane, first to Scotland, then to the Shetland Isles, and from there to Archangel, a northern port of Russia, he was met by the heads of the forces and the local Soviet and a representative from the Soviet Foreign Office; there, waiting to take him to Moscow, was Marshal Timoshenko's huge "Douglas", luxuriously fitted out as a staff plane. Within a few hours he had arrived in Moscow, there to be met by a great assemblage of distinguished people, including the head of the Department of State. Twice that day he saw Molotov, who greeted him warmly. Then he saw Vyshinsky and Mikoyan and made arrangements for the meeting of the Military Mission with the Russian military authorities. Stafford wrote:

"The atmosphere is so different here that it is difficult to realise it is the same place politically. I am very glad I came back, although I may not be able to do a great deal. I think I can probably do more than anybody else. . . . There is a most terrific battle going on around the old Russian frontier north and south of Minsk about 400 miles off and it is as yet undecided. The Russians seem calm and confident as to the immediate result though they are fully conscious of the tremendous pressure that is being exerted upon them."

On July 8th Stafford met with Stalin, now Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief of all the armed forces of the Union. They had met to talk over the terms of a treaty of alliance. Time and place were appropriate. Time? The year 1941, when



WITH ISOBEL IN FRONT OF THE KREMLIN, 1941





CIGARETTE BOX SIGNED BY STALIN, MOLOTOV, VOROSHILOV,  
LITVINOV, HARRIMAN AND LORD BEAVERBROOK, 1941

*(Photo: Illustrated)*



CRIPPS SIGNS THE ANGLO-SOVIET TREATY OF ALLIANCE.  
STALIN AND MOLOTOV BEHIND HIM

London was being bombed from the skies and the Nazi armies were smashing their way towards Moscow. Place? Stalin's room in one of the Kremlin buildings. A large room, simply furnished, his large desk standing at one end of the room, and on the wall behind the desk a large portrait of Lenin, his predecessor in the leadership of the Russian Revolution. A long table ran down one side of the room at which there were sufficient chairs to accommodate the members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. On the wall on the same side of the room was another portrait, that of Karl Marx, the pioneer of what is known as "Scientific Socialism". The room was in a large house, a part of a block of houses, within the Kremlin walls, which surround ancient palaces and churches built by various rulers of Russia in the course of seven centuries.

The Kremlin stands on a plateau at the centre of Moscow and from it radiate great highways to the outskirts of the city. One side of the Kremlin faces the beautiful Moscow river, and from this river bank stretches another great wall, known as the old Chinese wall, reaching deep into the city and telling of the days of an ancient invasion when the Tatars overran Muscovy. All the centuries of a thousand years have left their marks upon the Moscow of to-day. Moscow stands at the centre of the greatest land mass of the world and is the capital of the Union covering a sixth of the land surface of the earth and embracing some 180,000,000 people. At this time and in this place the leader of this great people, a son of a Georgian cobbler, who became a Marxist while a student in a religious seminary, and dedicated his life while yet a youth to the Bolshevik Revolution and all it implied, met with the Ambassador of the British Empire with its capital in London and its territory equal to one-fifth of the land surface of the world. The Ambassador, the son of a Baron, reared and trained as a ruler in all the appropriate institutions, public school, university and Church; a scientist, lawyer, political leader, Christian Socialist, Privy Councillor, Member of Parliament—Stafford Cripps

They were strikingly different in appearance. Stafford, tall, slim, bespectacled, clean-shaven, ascetic-looking, the cultured gentleman. Stalin, comparatively short, rugged as one who has battled his way through storm and stress, swarthy, black-haired, black moustache, easy of bearing in his loose khaki jacket with its single red star. Both men look you straight in the eye. Both have the habit of direct speech with a minimum of circumlocution. Both are quick thinkers and both like words to

represent deeds. Each knew what the other wanted from this meeting and they quickly came to the points of the agreement and the draft was made

It is not intended to give the impression that these two men thought alike, approached all questions alike, had the same philosophy of life and understanding of history, or had the same aims. In these matters they differed most profoundly. Both men were scientists. But Stalin was a social scientist who was convinced that human society had its own laws of motion and that while man made history, he made it with the materials which history gave him, changed society, and in the process changed himself. He believed that out of man's creative labour in the production of the means of life, mankind had created society. This society is composed of classes defined according to their relationship to the ownership of property in the means whereby the wealth of society is produced. These classes of property owners and non-property owners which had been differentiated and developed by the labour process had been in continuous conflict since the dawn of history and one form of property-owning class superseded another in the governing of society. He was convinced that until the non-property-owning industrial working class became the ruling class and abolished the old divisions of mankind according to property, and society as a whole socially owned all the means of wealth production, this social conflict would continue. The means to end this conflict lay in the leadership of the working class to the creation of a working-class state, in alliance with other oppressed classes. This alliance he believed would establish Socialist society as the means of its transition to Communism. While this class conflict characterised society everywhere, he held the view that it did not develop uniformly in all countries and that, therefore, Socialism could be established in one country long before others. This he said had been done in the Soviet Union and that it could and would enter into friendly relations with states of differing kinds which were agreeable to such relations. The changes in other states, he argued, would be determined by the relationship of the classes within them, and not upon such changes being imposed from the outside.

Stafford, on the other hand, did not accept this view of society and its development. He believed there were laws of nature such as biological laws, chemical laws, state laws, moral laws, but not laws of society's development. He recognised that there were classes in society and that they struggled against each other

But this for him was not a decisive feature of social life. He regarded society as local and national aggregations of individuals, each with a soul of his own, and that every individual, of whatever social class, needed a good social environment in which to develop the spirit of human brotherhood and co-operation in social well-being. He was a Christian, believing in God the Father, and Jesus his Son as the divine example of what each man should aim to be. He believed that a Socialist society would be better for all men and the most desirable form of society at which to aim, the means to the fulfilment of human brotherhood and co-operation, and the most efficient and necessary means of organising the economic and political life of society, if it could be achieved. He wished, however, to transcend the class struggle and achieve Socialism by the consent of the people of property to surrender their private ownership to the community at fair compensation rates.

Both men were of high principle and great character, whose integrity was unquestioned and whose sustained intensity of purpose had brought them into the forefront of the political leaders of their respective countries. They met to discuss neither their positions nor their philosophies, nor their respective political theories. They met, Stalin as the head of the Soviet State, and Stafford as the Ambassador of Britain, to discuss a specific matter—the making of a treaty of alliance between the Soviet Union and Britain, for the waging of a common war against the Fascist powers. The outcome of the discussion was the Anglo-Soviet Agreement published to the world on July 12th, 1941:

- “(1) The two Governments mutually undertake to render each other assistance and support of all kinds in the present war against Hitlerite Germany
- “(2) They further undertake that during this war they will neither negotiate nor conclude an armistice or treaty of peace except by mutual agreement ”

The time for the short ceremony of signing the agreement arrived on that day. Fifteen people, including Stafford, the secretaries and attachés and the heads of the British Mission, gathered in the Kremlin at twelve-thirty p.m. And there was Stalin, with Molotov, Vyshinsky and other officials of the Soviet Foreign Office, heads of the army and navy. Molotov signed for the Soviet Union, Stafford Cripps for Great Britain. Then came

the drafting of a protocol to the agreement that it come into full force at once and that no ratification was necessary. So at last Stafford rejoiced in seeing come to pass an agreement between the two countries for which he, more than any other man among the leaders of the two countries, had striven for years to achieve.

Incidentally the signing of this document was on an auspicious day in the life of Stafford and his wife, Isobel. It was the thirtieth anniversary of their wedding day. If the new event of the union of the two countries proved as successful as their marriage union, then it would be a success indeed and the two countries would travel through the years ahead in happy accord.

But would it be so? After all, was not the union of the two countries a marriage of convenience? Did it mean when the knot was tied on July 12th, 1941, that each endowed the other with all their worldly goods, and for better or worse they would travel together until "death do us part"? We had better let the analogy drop out of the record, for analogies usually fail to stand up to analysis, and none more so than this. For here we have two modern powers, one a Socialist State of Workers and Peasants, and the other the oldest of the modern Capitalist, Imperialist States, which only a few months earlier were almost at the point of war with each other. Would the British leaders forget the role of the Comintern in the internal affairs of the capitalist nations? Would the Soviet leaders blot out of their minds the memory of the twenty-three years of hate which Churchill and his colleagues inflicted on them, when the blotter rolled over the marriage certificate on July 12th? No. This agreement was the signal that both powers acknowledged that their paths had converged in a life and death struggle against powers which threatened their very existence, and none but fools would deny the urgent necessity of each helping the other against the common enemy. But each power brought into the alliance all their yesterdays; neither the Russians nor Stafford had any illusions about that, and Cripps realised that it would not be easy to remove suspicion and make the partnership into a real working accord.

One of the first things he did on this day of the treaty-signing was to introduce the leaders of the British Military Mission, that had returned to Moscow with him, to Stalin for a frank talk about exchange of military information and what aid they could render.

He was anxious at once to get the two groups working together. He could see at a glance that the testing of the sound-

ness of the working agreement would quickly turn upon the amount and kind of aid the British would render as the Nazi onslaught increased in fury and power. These were the days when Hitler calculated that his forces could drive the Red Army to the Urals inside three months: the battle for Smolensk was then raging. In England, the estimates among "leading" authorities varied. Some thought Hitler would fulfil his prediction. The optimists among these "leaders" thought the "Russians could last out six months". And there were those in high places who rejoiced in the turn of events and hoped the Germans and the Russians would knock each other to a point of exhaustion and then Britain could settle accounts with both. Then there were those who thought that the British should regard this period of Nazi concentration as a "breathing space" in which they could play a defensive role along the far reaches of the Empire, ready for the time when Hitler, having smashed the "Bolshies", would turn again to attack Britain with full force. Only a few "political outsiders" at this time entertained the fantastic notion that the Russians could take the full impact of the Nazi onslaught, exhaust it, and turn loose a counter-offensive that would "tear the guts out of the Nazi Army" and smash their way to Berlin and beyond.

Stafford Cripps knew nothing of Russia's military might and said so; but of two things he was convinced. First, that now the blow had fallen, the Russian people would fight with a tenacity and a passion without measure. Second, that Britain should be a straight and honest partner in the alliance, willing to give aid and sacrifice of every kind and compel Hitler to relax his attack in the east by forcing him to divert forces to the defence of the west. This he believed to be sound military and political strategy. It would hasten the end of the war and ensure the unity of both peoples for the years of peace.

When he had signed the Treaty of Alliance he felt that his purpose in Moscow had been accomplished, and that the sooner he could be released in order to serve the purpose of winning the war in Britain itself the better. All that he could do now was to break down the suspicions of the Russian leaders and facilitate an effective co-operation between the British Military Mission and the headquarters of the Russian military authorities.

Meanwhile, he had to make arrangements for moving the Embassy staff eastwards, should the expected bombing of Moscow make it necessary, and the staff had to receive instructions in fire-fighting and the like. A good shelter had been

made in the basement of the Embassy, and one of these days he would find himself living the life of many whom he had left behind in England. The first air-raid on Moscow was on July 21st, 1941, and three or four fire bombs dropped on the Embassy roof. Writing home about it, he said

"It started about 10 30 and didn't stop until 4 0 o'clock this morning. With the first wave of bombers we got three fire-bombs and then another with the next wave. We tackled three quite well but the fourth was in a part of the roof that we couldn't reach. It got hold thoroughly and had it not been for the magnificent work of all the personnel led by the three heads of the military mission the place would probably have been burnt out. As it was they managed just to hold it till after about an hour the Fire Brigade were able to come. They were all splendid and there wasn't a whimper even from a child. There was very little high explosive near us and though there were some bad fires as far as one can see they were all got under control fairly quickly. There are no signs of any this morning except some smoke in one place where the worst fire was. The Kremlin was unscathed. We are expecting a succession of nights now that they have started.

"The damage to the roof is quite bad and the whole place is in a mess with the water which is dripping through the ceilings. There was a regular cataract down the front stairs last night. The worst of the fire was over my bedroom, but luckily it was all at the end away from my bed so that I was able to sleep there to the accompaniment of water dripping into two buckets and the firemen hammering away in the roof as well as the fighters flying over and a few final bombers coming! Joe was awfully good and didn't seem to mind in the least so long as he was with me."

One day brought a surprise which Stafford said "I wouldn't have missed for anything." He had been to the Kremlin to see Molotov, when, on an air-raid alarm, they ordered him down to the basement in an adjoining building. Who should he meet there but Litvinov, a leading figure of the eventful years between the two wars. There was a time when this man had been reputed to be the most able Foreign Secretary who ever appeared before the Assembly of the League of Nations. He was now elderly, suffering from heart trouble. They talked of old times and the eventful years after Stafford leapt into the political arena and they had got to know each other. In the course of the conversation Litvinov expressed the view that the men mainly responsible for the present state of affairs were Simon, Chamberlain and Laval. He thought that the League of Nations could

have been used to stop all aggression if it had been properly used in the first instance against Japan in 1931. He told Stafford too that he had warned both Eden and Halifax that a situation was bound to arise in which Germany would have overrun the whole of Europe except Russia and England and that then the only question would be as to how the powers would arrange themselves for the final round. Any two might be against the other one! He was relieved that things had turned out as they had.

In these days, too, Stafford met Stalin frequently. They got on well together because they were perfectly frank with each other—talked in the “language of arithmetic and not algebra”. It was in one of these talks that Stafford persuaded Stalin, when discussing Soviet-Polish relations, to grant an immediate amnesty to every Polish citizen. This helped not a little to make possible the co-operation of the various missions with their Russian counterparts. There was later a story set going in London gossiping circles that Stalin preferred to negotiate with men like Beaverbrook and the drinkers and diners in preference to the “ascetic” Stafford Cripps. That of course is a nonsensical story for the gullible who can swallow anything.

When Cripps got to this stage of his affairs and thought they were working satisfactorily, he began to raise the question of his return to England. There was one thing, however, agitating his mind that he would have much liked to carry through and one cannot help wondering, had Stafford been able to carry out his ideas, how much it might have changed the course of subsequent relations between the two countries. He wanted, possibly more than anything else, to have an opportunity to reach an understanding with Stalin concerning post-war Europe. But such a discussion he could not introduce without the prior agreement of His Majesty's Government and at this time H.M. Government had no ideas concerning the shape of things in Europe after the war. So he thought he would like to get back to England to study this problem, discuss it fully with the Government and return as a special emissary to Stalin. A good idea, but one which would come to nothing. History was being made at such a pace and on such a world-wide scale that he would find himself caught up by the course of events and called upon to fulfil other missions of great importance.

The month of August arrived, and Stafford and the other Ambassadors were still in Moscow, much to their surprise. He found now that the co-operation was not working as well as it



should. However great the frankness and directness of Stalin, it did not alter the fact that below him, and especially in, shall we call them, the middle ranks of the bureaucrats, the old prejudices remained and the old suspicions were as rampant as ever. The Military Mission got neither the information nor the co-operation to which they thought they were entitled. The latter was improved and then the economic one still hung fire. Then the British help seemed not to be forthcoming. There were hold-ups in the shipping of goods. Then a British journal indiscreetly published some facts about Russian air-raids on Berlin, including the aerodromes from which the Russian bombers flew.

But the economic agreement was finally settled.

By the middle of August Stafford had become quite sensitive to the military position on the Russian front and was feeling that.

"Too many people at home are failing to realise that this is not another war in which we will help if we can but the same war and that now Russia is one of our fronts and must be regarded and treated as such. Just as we should undertake some relieving action if it were on a front of our own so we ought to take every risk to relieve the pressure before it is too late and we lose a great part of the benefit of this front, as we shall do if there is any collapse which we might possibly help to avoid by more active help."

He was feeling, too, that the western Governments did not share this point of view and were slow to react to the situation on the Russian front. Mr. Harry Hopkins had been to Moscow. He arrived towards the end of July, and in August President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill had issued a proclamation about the aid Britain and America would render; but the first week in September had arrived and the delegation had not yet got on the way. It was not until September 10th that Stafford received intimation about the proposed conference with Beaverbrook and Harriman. But this conference was to deal only with supplies, and there were no signs whatever of any relieving action on the west.

Meanwhile, the German attacks were proceeding with terrific fury. The battle for Smolensk had ended, and two mighty efforts were being made against Leningrad and Kiev. According to the orders issued by the Nazi generals when the battle for Smolensk began, their aim was that by that time they should have taken Moscow. One day it will be recognised that this battle was possibly the greatest battle in history, possibly even greater

than the later battle of Stalingrad. Its significance in the history of the whole war is as that of the Battle of the Marne in the war of 1914-18. There the allied armies held, and from that date the ultimate defeat of the Germans became assured. The Battle of Smolensk smashed the myth of the irresistibility of the blitzkrieg. It raged for thirty days and nights and at the end of it the Germans bestrode a town of charred ruins after colossal carnage on both sides. But the Russians had called a halt to the blitzkrieg, destroyed the faith of an army in its invincibility and the fantastic conceptions of the time necessary to conquer the Union. The thirty days' Battle of Smolensk put "paid" to these illusions, broke the back of the central attack and compelled them to spend another sixty days in the re-organisation of their forces before they could advance again towards Moscow. The Russians had lost tremendously in casualties, but their army remained intact ready to bend still further, until the full impact of the German offensive had been exhausted. Then would come the recoil and the unleashing of the mounting reserve armies building up in the rear of Moscow, that would sweep the German armies out of the Union and like a mighty broom of destiny scatter them across the battlefields of Europe and dump the remnants on the ruins of Berlin. As Stafford sat fretting in Moscow toward the end of September about the lack of "relief action" in the west and the slowness of even material aid, the German armies were attacking Leningrad and Kiev in full fury. Would Leningrad fall? The world waited with bated breath as it watched from afar the sway of these great battles, and not a few people swallowed their criticisms of Russia's attack on Finland. It was now clear to all men that had not the Russians shattered the Mannerheim line and destroyed altogether the power of the Finns to attack the Russians from the outskirts of Leningrad in the rear, Leningrad could never have survived. The fall of Leningrad would have meant the collapse of the northern front, and the sure and certain encirclement of Moscow. Leningrad did not fall. The Russo-Finnish war had now to be viewed as part of the greater war against Nazi Germany.

In the midst of this tremendous drama, in which the Russians were being strained to the limit of endurance, and in which more of them were slaughtered than their allies lost throughout six years of war, no relief action came from the west. Mr. Herbert Morrison however made a speech to the effect that Britain, *commensurate with her safety*, would do all she could to help. And the Russians remembered Munich and the rapidity with

which Britain and France had organised an expeditionary force to rush to the aid of Finland.

Stafford was worried by the effect of these things on the Russians. But the Beaverbrook Mission was on the way. Kiev fell and the Russian line had to bend again. But the greatest thrill from England came over the radio toward the end of September, when it was reported that tank production had gone up fifty per cent that week after it had been promised that the tanks would be sent to Russia. At the end of September, the Beaverbrook-Harriman Mission arrived. Stafford was not present at the meetings of the heads of the Mission with Stalin. Beaverbrook left the British Ambassador rather high and dry with regard to information about the proceedings. But he would leave him with most difficult problems. For Beaverbrook was evidently making the maximum of promises much in the spirit of Father Christmas, while revealing nothing of Britain's capacity to fulfil its promises. On October 2nd, the conference was ended and a banquet was held to celebrate the agreements that had been made.

The Mission departed and the troubles began, all of which soon demonstrated that while Stafford thought the war should be waged as one war, it was not and would not be so. There was not a pooling of resources but conditional help between war-time "friends", each suspicious of the other, and both carrying into their friendship glowing embers of their old enmity, all the prejudices and habits developed in their differing social and political history.

On October 14th, a Trade Union delegation arrived, led by Sir Walter Citrine, the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, who had been to Russia previously.

The next day Molotov sent for Stafford and the other Ambassadors, to tell them that the Government had decided to evacuate Moscow and that the Diplomatic Corps would go with them. That was at one o'clock. They must start off from Moscow that night at nine o'clock. Stafford wrote of this meeting in a letter home:

"I have never seen him looking so tired and ill. He had obviously been up all night and the decision hurt him terribly as one could see. He was deadly pale and his collar all awry whereas he is generally very neat and tidy. He looked completely exhausted and I think was. We said that we would like to send away the rest of our staff and stay with him until the last moment but he begged us not to, and on his direct request we said

that we would go with the rest. He stated that they intended to defend Moscow at all cost and to continue fighting to the end. They are obviously very hard pressed and it makes my heart sore that our help should have been so long delayed as to mean a great victory to the Germans. We shall have to pay the price in years of suffering. . . "

On that day, October 15th the German forces, tanks and supporting motorised infantry, had broken through the Russian defences and were on the high road to Moscow. The Germans were advancing with immense forces, striving, simultaneously with the central drive direct on Moscow, to outflank the Russians thrusting towards Tula in the south and Kalinin in the north. in the north.

Six weeks after the fall of Smolensk, Hitler announced:

"For the last twenty-four hours operations have been going on which will have a decisive result on the conduct and duration of the war "

Eighty divisions were engaged in an all-out effort to seize Moscow. Unless the Hitler army, unprepared for winter warfare, could get Moscow before the winter set in, the German army would be decimated as well as battered beyond all hope of victory. On this day, October 15th, they had passed Mojaisk and on the face of things the Germans had every reason to feel that they were in sight of their goal. But the Russians flung into the battle some of their finest divisions, and in the following forty-eight hours the snow-covered battlefields and icy roads were the scenes of terrific fighting in which the Soviet Army drove the Germans back almost to Mojaisk and all the territory lost on the 15th was regained. But the end was not yet. Hitler had drawn on his allies, Italians, Spaniards, Roumanians and Finns, while little aid had yet reached the Russians from her ally and Britain was still in diplomatic relations with the Finnish Government! Whatever the cost, Russia had to go through these months of carnage alone. All the world looked on and wondered how long now before the end. But the world did not yet see that behind the amazing defence lay a master strategy which had yet to show its full face. Added to the theory of defence in depth which had governed the Soviet Government's political strategy so completely since the signing of the German-Soviet Pact, there was also the application of what is known as the "theory of reserves". In practice it meant that with the aid of defence in depth Soviet Russia would take the full impact of the Germans by means of stubborn fighting. They would retreat

rather than allow the issue to be fought to a finish on the spot, keep intact their army and tire the enemy. When the point had been reached where the Germans showed a steady decline in the tempo of their fighting and definite signs of exhaustion, the Soviet Army, which had been accumulating its reserves of men and material in the rear, would launch the counter-offensive with fresh troops equipped with massive material. The application of such a theory demanded foresight, infinite patience, tremendous fighting capacity and sound judgment of the time for the counter-offensive to be launched. The counter-attack which drove the Germans back on Mojaisk was not the decisive turn of the tide. It was still part of the defensive pattern of the struggle. But the fact that the Germans were driven back at this point was the signal that the time was near at hand.

It was in these anxious days, when there was a temporary fear that the Germans would break through to Moscow, that Stafford and the entourage of Ambassadors and staffs set out on an indescribable journey to Kuibyshev. This time, he and his colleagues had to suffer all the inconveniences of improvisations of transport under most extraordinary circumstances, the migration of masses of people, machinery, factory equipment of all kinds, moving east, and thousands upon thousands of soldiers, guns, tanks, artillery, every kind of military equipment moving from east to west. And there was Russian organisation to cope with in addition. The congestion on the railways was enormous. One really wondered that anything moved at all, and military orders had to receive priority. About a hundred Britishers with Stafford and baggage (mountains of it) arrived at the railway station at eight o'clock to find it literally besieged by masses of people, also going east. The G.P.U. performed the policeman's service of guiding them through the crowds to a restaurant which had been set aside for the diplomats. It was dark and it was snowing, and lights were not allowed. They were supposed to leave at nine. They left at one a.m. Slowly they proceeded through the night, Stafford and Joe sitting side by side in a wagon-lit. The train stopped and they waited. It started, and it stopped. Other trains, incredibly long, rolled past them loaded with the machinery of Moscow factories, and the second day was much like the first. They averaged about ten miles an hour. They ate from the stocks of food they had brought with them. The Americans were good with hot coffee on tap. On October 19th, they reached Svoran, on the Volga. On October 20th, they arrived in Kuibyshev, where they were dumped in a big barrack

of a house that had been recently used by the Pioneers (Russian Boy Scouts) The next day, when they had all got settled in and made the best of the improvised accommodation, Stafford went to see Vyshinsky and discovered that the General Staff and Molotov and company had not left Moscow. He felt they had been tricked! He did not know what had happened on the Moscow front or his feelings in the matter would not have been so bad. Now he demanded that he and some of his staff and the heads of the mission should be sent back to Moscow at once. It was a most irritating situation. The one thing in life which Stafford cannot tolerate is to be left isolated, with nothing to do and no means of doing the things he wants to do. Kuibyshev and this kind of irritation for Stafford were well associated. It was here that he and Geoffrey Wilson had to wait with nothing to do on their way back to Chungking nearly two years earlier. Now they were here again and were frustrated at every end and turn.

Then Sir Walter Citrine came along and they both agreed that the British Government ought, without delay, to send troops and equipment to the Russian front somewhere and somehow. The lack of aid had by now begun to impede talks with the Russian leaders on anything. The attempt to settle the Lease-Lend Agreement, which included a proposal that the Russians should, in return for the supplies sent by the British, maintain free any British troops sent to Russia, came to nothing. Stafford could not get further than the point that "the question did not arise yet, for there were no British 'forces' in Russia". He was really at a "loose end". More than ever he felt his work in Russia was completed and that he should make for London at the earliest possible moment. He would raise the issue with Churchill at once. But he still had to hang on in irritation in Kuibyshev.

December came and the great hour of decision on the fate of the German advance on Moscow was coming nearer and nearer. During October and November, the Germans managed to advance within thirty miles of Moscow and were still pressing hard. But it had become distinctly observable that the spirit was going out of the attack. Its strength declined. By the beginning of December the Soviet High Command were convinced that decline had set in. The temperature fell sharply. On December 5th, the Russians knew that their great ally in these circumstances, the Russian winter, had really begun. They knew their winter and were prepared. At dawn on December 6th, the "greatest realist" of his day gave the order to counter-

attack With dramatic suddenness and stupendous power, the huge reserve army which had been accumulating and preparing for this day behind Moscow, splendidly equipped for winter warfare, swept irresistibly into the attack. The German armies were smashed. Moscow was really set free from danger. The Germans were flung back and so decisive was this defeat that they were unable to start any spring offensive in 1942 and mid-summer had passed before there was any attempt to make a new serious trial of strength. The Germans failed at Leningrad too. Indeed, there would be but one more stupendous effort culminating at Stalingrad and the faces of the German soldiers would be finally turned toward Berlin.

But rivers of blood had flowed from the Red Army in those terrible months of savage fighting in the regions overrun by the Nazi armies. A great population had been decimated, hundreds of towns and thousands of villages had been utterly destroyed. The losses of men and material had been terrible, such as had been seen in no other war in all history. And, as yet, little aid from the West had arrived, but at last the British Government had declared war on Finland, Roumania and Hungary!

On December 7th, the day after the Germans were driven away from the gates of Moscow, the Japanese struck their treacherous blow at Pearl Harbour and two more great powers had become engulfed in World War II. The alignment of forces in this war was complete, but once again, even in its extension, it was an alignment of powers and not a pooling of resources into a single war against a single enemy.

No sooner had the Germans been driven back than permission was promptly given for the Ambassadors to return to Moscow. Stafford returned there, rejoicing, on December 11th. The day after his return, there was an air-raid alarm. The guard insisted that he should go to a deep shelter. On arriving at the shelter, says Stafford.

"I bashed my head against what I believe to have been the edge of a black marble pillar. I bled like a pig and then lots of people came to give first aid! ."

The next day the doctor removed the bandage the first-aiders had put on for him and put on instead "a neat little piece of gauze covered with collodion" and all was well.

Two days later, Anthony Eden arrived for his conference with Stalin and Molotov. Stafford felt depressed about it. He thought that more and more the Allies would be fighting two separate

wars and the Russians would be stepping up their claims as their certainty of victory became more assured. He gathered from that meeting, too, that Stalin and all his colleagues were now speaking and acting with confidence and without strain.

Eden brought Stafford news in which he rejoiced greatly. The Government had agreed to his return to England. From now on he could make all arrangements to leave on January 6th, 1942. The arrangements were not difficult. His greatest problem was Joe. He couldn't take Joe with him and he hated leaving him behind. They had been great friends. It was easier for him to say farewell to humans than to Joe. Cripps left him behind to be looked after by his successor. After farewell meetings with staff and friends and the leaders of the Soviet Union, Stafford gave a farewell message to the people of the Soviet Union. He said

"Hitler's pride has been broken by the impact of your resistance, and today his forces are rolling back.

"The whole civilised world proclaims your victories, and we, your Allies, are proud to count ourselves as such, but the end is not yet

"Your successes, magnificent though they are, permit no slackening of effort on our part or yours

"The alliance between our two great countries must be made firmer and stronger yet, so that together we may accomplish the task so well begun

"When victory comes, of which we are so confident, our two nations will have the privilege of leading the peoples of Europe toward a civilisation of sanity and co-operation. Together we must march forward to that victory. Together we must work and plan to bring about the the happier life which their suffering and their patience have earned for masses of humanity."

With these parting words, Stafford Cripps left the Soviet Union for England. All the world acclaimed his ambassadorship to Moscow as a triumph, a job well done, and most people agreed with him that what needed yet to be done there could be done by others. But what next? That question he asked himself, and others debated. For he was still a man without a party, a leader without an army, an "independent" M.P. whom the Labour Party had rejected and the other parties couldn't have.



## CHAPTER 16

### WHAT NEXT?

WHAT Stafford Cripps did immediately he arrived in England in January, 1942, was characteristic of the man. It was a postscript to his ambassadorial activities and is, in many ways, as important as anything he was able to achieve in Moscow. His first task was to convince people at home that Russia could defeat the German onslaught, and second, to see that she did not fail through lack of help from Britain.

Stafford did not allow the emotional thrill of the Soviet triumphs to unbalance his judgment. He knew that the stemming of the tide did not mean that the Germans were yet defeated. He knew only too well that the mad, savage drive into western Russia had destroyed great economic and industrial resources, besides inflicting human losses, the magnitude of which those in Britain would never comprehend. He knew also that while the Russians had saved a vast amount of machinery and factory equipment from destruction, loaded it into hundreds of trains, and moved it far behind the scene of battle and desolation, it would take months to get it into production once more and to replace the losses in war equipment which the Red Army had sustained.

Meanwhile, Russia's toughness had been a tonic to the British people after the long series of defeats and disasters which they had grimly heard recounted since the beginning of the war.

Against the background of unrelieved disaster, the tremendous defence of the Soviet Union lit the sky with splendour and hope of victories to come. Now they asked: could the Russians continue to hold out and win through to victory? Stafford Cripps was convinced they could if they received the right kind of help and the British put into the war the same spirit as the people of Soviet Russia. He gave a press interview on his arrival. "When I left," he said, "the Russians had their tails up." But he felt that few in Britain realised the realities of the war in Russia and how much Russia needed help.

Writing in *The Tribune* of February 6th, he said:

"We speak with pleasure and with pride of the fact that the Russians applied the 'scorched earth' policy in their efforts to stay the advancing Germans—that is, while the Germans are still advancing. But do we ever think what it has meant to the hundreds of thousands of peasants who have to be left behind in the scorched areas—left behind to meet, unarmed and unprotected, the German anger and hate? These countless thousands are as much the true heroes of war as any soldier on the front line. Faced by cold and starvation they hang grimly on.

"As the German troops go forward they organise themselves into guerrilla bands, ambushing and destroying in the forests and along the highways and risking and meeting the most terrible suffering and torture in case of capture. That has been the life of millions of the ordinary humble peasants in the occupied parts of Russia, and that heroism has played a vital part in the war. It is indeed a total war, total in its suffering and total in its effort. Has it been total in the same intense degree so far as we in England are concerned and the part that we have played?"

To an enthusiastic audience of 3,000 people in Bristol, he said two days later that he had returned to Britain with one main purpose—to urge the necessity of closer co-operation between Britain and the Soviet Union. Speaking of conditions in Russia he said what impressed him most was the total self-sacrifice of the ordinary people. Russia had a much better idea than Britain of the meaning of total war. He continued.

"There seems to be a lack of urgency in the atmosphere of this country. It is almost as if we were spectators rather than participants. Perhaps I might compare it to the difference between a keen and enthusiastic supporter of a football team and one of the members of the team. After the match, the supporter goes home and thinks it all out, not as part of his own active effort, but as something he has seen and studied.

" . This war is not a game to be played according to certain rules. It is a life and death struggle for survival and in that struggle there are, and must be, no particular interests.

"We must get rid of the idea that there are two separate wars in Europe, that we are fighting one of them and the Russians another. It is a single war. We must treat the Soviet Union as our allies in a single war, with full consultation and full confidence. We must place our resources where they are most needed in the views of the allies as a whole. If we do that; if here we work with 100 per cent effort; if we give to Russia all the support we can, then, in my view, there is every chance of Germany being defeated by this time next year."

That speech was addressed to the people of his constituency in

East Bristol. His most active supporters organised a reception for him, followed by a public meeting. But what a fluttering among the mandarins of the Labour Party! The people of East Bristol still looked upon the "man without a party" as their Member of Parliament, as indeed he was. The East Bristol Labour Party still looked upon him as their spokesman and its members rushed to give him welcome and to hear all he had to say on the situation. But some were nervous lest they would cause offence to Transport House. What should they do? One had the bright idea which all approved, that he should telephone to Labour Party Headquarters for instructions! So the question was put "May we attend the reception to Sir Stafford Cripps?"

What a problem!

They couldn't answer at once. They must think about it.

After due consideration a solution was found—a masterpiece in the best tradition of "passing the buck"! Back to Bristol came the reply. "You may attend a reception to the ex-Ambassador to the Soviet Union, but you may not attend a reception to Sir Stafford Cripps, ex-member of our Party," and Bristol laughed and laughed, and thousands flocked to hear him, caring not at all about the stupendous problem thus resolved.

Later that day, at nine-fifteen p.m. to be precise, he delivered a tremendous speech to the waiting millions of listeners on the B B C. They were stirred, not merely by the content of his message, but by the manner of the telling of it. Carefully chosen words, simple and direct, with every sentence laden with deep feeling and passionate sincerity, came straight to every listener in the British Isles and many millions of

"I hope that all of you who are listening-in are settled comfortably by your radio, warm and well-sheltered, with a feeling of gratitude, even though some of you have been bombed out of your homes, that you still have a roof over your heads, enough food to eat and the means of keeping out the cold.

"You have had snow and cold during this winter—but not the cold of Russia, where 30 to 40 degrees below zero are no exceptional experience.

"You have known the tragic horrors of prolonged aerial bombardments, many of you have lost members of your families or friends, and still more of you will have had your homes and your possessions destroyed—but you have not experienced the brutalities and the savage violence and rapine of the Nazi invaders.

"Many of you are members of the Home Guard and have to train and watch, but you have not yet had to turn yourselves into guerrilla fighters

behind the enemy lines, certain that you would die of torture if you were captured

"I know that you have worked and are working long hours and your food rations are not as ample as you have been accustomed to in times of peace—but you have not been starved, stripped of your clothing in the bitter cold open streets and forced to work day and night as slaves for a foreign enemy, building roads and fortifications to defeat your own countrymen

"I want you to realise the difference between the fortunes of war as you have experienced them and as they have been suffered by millions of our Russian allies. Those sufferings are going on at this very moment, while we sit in comparative comfort and safety—borne by the workers of all kinds, the co-operative farmers, doctors, actors, managers, mothers and children—all our counterparts in Soviet Russia."

This was not new to his hearers, but few men had had the courage to point it out with the same force and conviction. British workers had a guilty conscience as they listened eagerly to the news from Russia, but so far aid had been inchoate, ineffective. Stafford went on to another point which commanded even more instantaneous agreement among the workers.

"The Russians will tolerate nothing that decreases the war effort or the efficiency of the fighting forces. Hoarders of food, black-marketeers and other saboteurs who try to take advantage of the difficult conditions of the country are given short shrift when they are discovered

"It would be difficult for the Russians to understand the tolerance which is shown in this country to these fifth-columnists."

Here was someone in authority who recognised that equality of sacrifice was a farce and that many people were fighting a very comfortable war, meanwhile frustrating efforts to get to grips with things, and because he had made this recognition, the rest of his speech struck home:

"Had our efforts in production been greater we should not now be retreating in North Africa

"Each hour of work that is lost, each day that we do less than we might by way of productive effort, each needless article that we use, makes our total effort less effective and lets down someone somewhere, who is giving his life to save all that we hold dear—whether it be in Russia, Malaya, Africa or elsewhere.

"Every hour by which we can shorten the war will mean the saving of hundreds of lives and of the suffering of millions. The cry goes up all over

the world 'How long?' Each one of us can give an answer through our unstinted sacrifice. That answer must be 'Not a moment shall be lost through any failure of mine. I will not let you down by slackness or selfishness on my part.' "

Now he passed from the challenge direct and the moral appeal and linked it all up to the longings in every man's heart in greater or lesser degree, for the world of his dreams. He lifted his talk from the level of the plain and the valley to the heights of everyone's aspirations. He went on

"We are anxiously reaching out to that time when the new world for which the peoples are longing, and for which almost every man and woman is daily hoping, begins to show itself in clear outline on our horizon

"Not the new order of brutalised domination with which Hitler has sought to delude the people, but a world of new values, cleansed of the old evils and offering a full and free manhood to the people of every class, religion, nation and colour—that practical ideal for which equally the people of Russia and of the occupied countries of Europe are in reality fighting, that hope which makes all sacrifices seem worth while, that positive achievement which we are determined shall issue from this ghastly war, itself the negation of every teaching of our Christian civilisation "

Having glimpsed the dream world, he began his final appeal, which struck home to every listener as nothing he or she had heard since the war began. Everyone felt it to be a personal message as from one inspired by a Messianic mission:

"Today our needs and those of our Russian allies are as great and as pressing. Victory will continue to hang in the balance so long as men and women hesitate to play their full part. The future beckons to us across the bleak and agonising months of war that still lie between us and victory. Let us hasten forward, impelled by our own efforts to greet that more sane and happy future "

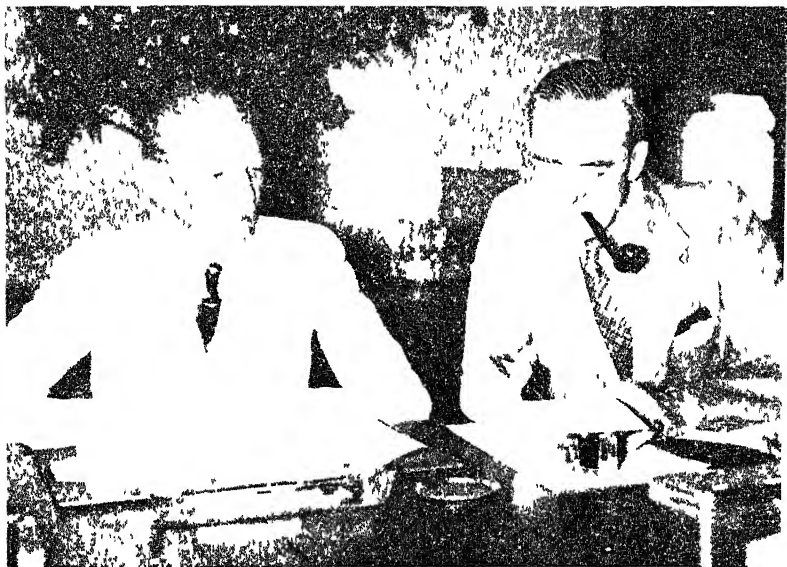
That speech, listened to by millions throughout the length and breadth of the land, swept him to heights of popularity such as he had never hitherto experienced. The feeling he had engendered towards himself was comparable only to that of Churchill after Dunkirk. People talked of him as the "alternative to Churchill". Certainly it determined for him an answer to the personal question "What next?" Overnight he had won the support of millions of his fellow men belonging to all



NEW DELHI, 1942, WITH GANDHI

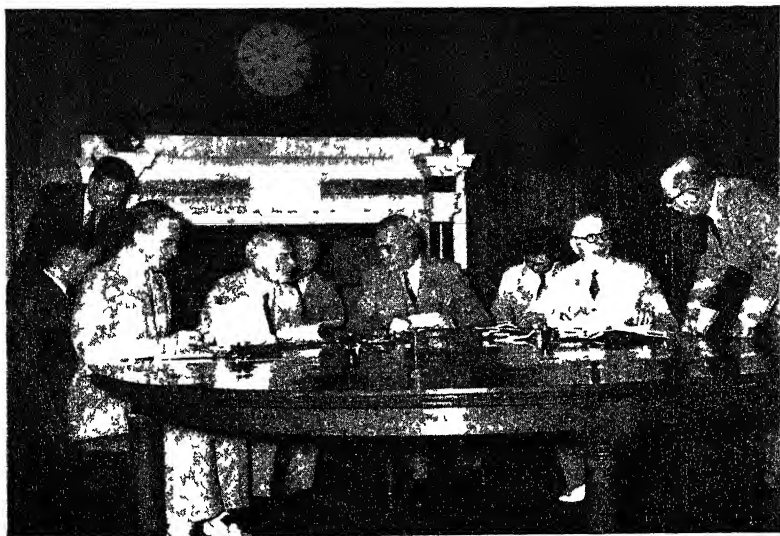


NEW DELHI, 1942, WITH NEHRU



NEW DELHI, 1946, WITH JINNAH

(Photo Picture Post)



NEW DELHI, 1946, THE VICEROY, LORD WAVELL WITH THE CABINET MISSION. (Left to right at the table) CRIPPS, LORD PETHICK-LAWRENCE, LORD WAVELL AND A V ALEXANDER





RETURN FROM INDIA, 1942, WITH LEOPOLD AMERY, DAUGHTER PEGGY AND LADY CRIPPS  
(Photo: *Daily Herald*)

parties and none. From the moment it was publicly known that Stafford was to return to England his future had been the matter of public and private discussion. Indeed, immediately after he had signed the Treaty of Alliance with Soviet Russia, *Reynolds' Newspaper* of July 20th, 1941, the weekly paper of the Co-operative Movement, carried an article which said

"... Some day, Sir Stafford will return from Moscow, a hero of victory, his public record unstained even by the suspicion of past failure. He will not return to the Bar. He will not return to the Labour Party unless that Party is wise and generous enough to invite him to join. He will have a great following. His sense of power, never modest, will be developed fully. He will be dressed up in the garb of leadership—and he will find somewhere to go!"

The *Manchester Guardian* on January 6th had no doubt that Mr. Churchill would be sure to welcome the opportunity of enlisting his services.

The *News Chronicle* on January 14th said:

"There will be general disappointment if Stafford Cripps is not offered a high position in the War Cabinet. He is one of the few leading figures in the Government or outside, who command popular confidence."

It was no surprise therefore when Mr. Churchill invited him to the position of Minister of Supply. It has been asserted that he refused to take on this job because it did not carry with it membership of the War Cabinet. This was not wholly the case. He declined this post because he was convinced that neither he nor anyone else could make a success of it with the then existing relations between the Minister of Supply and the Minister of Production, who, incidentally, was Lord Beaverbrook. He was convinced that with the former subordinate to the latter, and represented in the Cabinet by Beaverbrook, who would be responsible for allocations and priorities of materials, such an arrangement would impede any Minister of Supply from making a success of his job.

Stafford expressed his regret that under the circumstances he must decline the offer. At the same time he expressed his willingness to undertake any special tasks "as for instance, with regard to India."

After his broadcast there was a reconstruction of the Government. Arthur Greenwood, Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party, was dropped from the Cabinet, Clement Attlee, the Leader of the Labour Party, became Secretary of State for Dominion

Affairs. Oliver Lyttelton succeeded Lord Beaverbrook as Minister of Production. Stafford Cripps was appointed Lord Privy Seal in place of Clement Attlee, and then, to the surprise of all, Mr. Churchill resigned his position as Leader of the House of Commons and named Stafford Cripps to succeed him. Churchill said to the Commons that he did not resign.

"Without sorrow from that post. I am sure, however, it is in the public interest, and I am sure also that my right hon friend the member for East Bristol, the new Lord Privy Seal, will prove to the House that he is a respecter of its authority and a leader capable of dealing with all the incidents, episodes and emergencies of House of Commons and Parliamentary life."

Thus, the question "What next?" was answered for the time being.

As Leader of the House, Sir Stafford was responsible for the management of the Government's business in the House. As a member of the War Cabinet, Sir Stafford had as his colleagues, besides Mr. Churchill the Prime Minister, and Mr. Attlee, who was Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and was recognised as the Minister who deputised for the Prime Minister when he was away, Sir John Anderson, Lord President of the Council; Mr. Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and Mr. Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service. These six Ministers formed the War Cabinet, which was the supreme body in control and superintendence of the whole policy of Government, including both the direction of the war effort of the country in its military, civil and economic aspects, as well as the ultimate control over all other aspects of Government policy. In the words of Mr. Churchill, they were "collectively and individually responsible for the whole policy of the country; and they are the ones who are alone held accountable for the conduct of the war".

On February 24th, when the House of Commons opened, Mr. Churchill sat on the Government front bench, with Stafford Cripps on his left and Clement Attlee on his right—a remarkable transformation since that memorable day when Stafford faced a packed house of angry Tories from the front Opposition bench demanding that the Government should show a common-sense attitude toward the arrest of the British engineers in Russia. Now the "rejected of the Labour Party" stood side by side with the leaders of the two large parties, acclaimed by both for his services and about to lead the House of Commons itself. At no

time in the history of the British Parliament, in war or at peace, had a man without a party held so honoured a position. As soon as Mr. Churchill had announced the changes in his Government, a two-day debate on the war situation began. The Government had been under severe criticism for its inefficient conduct of the war. Hence a number of the changes in the personnel of the Government. Did the changes mean a change in policy and offer hope of a new spirit and direction of the war? Churchill reported on the situation as well as the changes. Stafford Cripps wound up the debate for the Government.

For two days he sat taking notes of the debate. When he rose to speak, the House was as full to overflowing as on that other great occasion, but this time he was received with cheers. He began:

"I almost feel that I ought to ask the indulgence of this House, since it is very nearly two years now since I last had the honour of addressing its members "

The voice and manner were familiar. He said in conversational tones

"Let me start by saying to the House in all sincerity that I am most anxious to make the criticism and the co-operation of the members as fruitful as possible, from the point of view of our joint effort to win the war. I shall regard my position as Leader of the House as having for its object the interpretation of the views of the House to the Cabinet and also the views of the War Cabinet to the House."

In that opening he at once won the confidence of the House. For so long it had felt completely frustrated, that what was said by the House mattered little and that it had become the receiving chamber for what the Government cared to tell it. Stafford's declaration that he was to be the voice of the Commons in the Cabinet was a new kind of declaration and would mean new life to the House itself. He continued:

"I have in the past been a critic myself of many things and Governments, and I fully appreciate the fact that both critics and supporters alike are out to help to win the war and to make, each in his own way, that contribution which he feels able to make to the united war effort."

It quickly became clear too that Cripps remembered his own criticism of the working of the Parliament. If they had forgotten he would soon remind them. He said:

"If, however, we are determined to preserve and use to the full our machinery of democracy, we must not be afraid to examine its working, with a view to creating from it a machine of the maximum efficiency for our purpose, whether that purpose be victory in the present or reconstruction in the future "

After paying tribute to those who had been pulling their weight he spoke scathingly of those

"who appear to regard their personal interests in a manner which is not consonant with that totality of effort which is required if we are to come through the present difficulties with success. The Government are determined that such an attitude cannot be permitted to persist.

We are not engaged in a war effort in which we can have as our motto, 'Business as usual' or 'Pleasure as usual'. The Government propose to take such measures as may be necessary to prevent the abuse of the wishes of the majority of the people by any small or selfish group "

Quickly following this speech came the regulations prohibiting the use of petrol for any reason but that of work. Sports were curtailed. Clothes were more severely rationed. And as things do happen that way, the blame for these austerity measures were not laid on the necessity of winning the war but on Cripps himself.

In that debate too he promised a debate on India, for he said:

"The Government are much concerned about the situation there and the debate will take place upon the basis of a Government decision in this matter "

What did that mean? It appeared to those who remembered the continuous pressure Stafford had exercised upon the Government before he went to Moscow that this man had promptly used his new position to further the views he had expressed so frequently concerning the future of India. They would not have long to wait for the confirmation of their ideas.

Three weeks later in the debate on India, Mr. Winston Churchill made the statement in the House of Commons:

"We propose to send a member of the War Cabinet to India, to satisfy himself on the spot, by personal consultation, that the conclusions upon which we are agreed, and which we believe represent a just and final solution, will achieve their purpose. My right hon. and learned friend the Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House has volunteered to undertake this task. He carries with him the full confidence of His Majesty's

Government      My right hon friend will set out as soon as convenient and suitable arrangements can be made. I am sure he will command in this task the heartfelt good wishes of all parts of the House .      ”

So the unexpected had happened again. What was the meaning of this? Was Stafford a scapegoat of the party politicians, who had made this appointment confident that he would fail, and failing, they could lay the blame on him? The facts however rule out such an interpretation. That there was a serious situation in India all knew. Indeed everyone knew that affairs in India were going from bad to worse and India was moving rapidly towards a great political explosion, and unless some agreement could be arrived at with the leaders of the Indian people, the British Government would be faced with a situation in which she would soon have to deal with a war of independence by the four hundred and fifty millions of India.

Before he became a member of the War Cabinet, Stafford had indicated his willingness to be used on the “India question”. Now that he had been appointed Leader of the House of Commons, he would have been well justified to have turned down any suggestion that he should go to India on this mission if the claims of personal ambition ruled his mind. It should have been clear to those who were at all acquainted with his career in the Labour Party that personal ambition is not the leitmotif of his career or he would never have pursued the course he had with the Socialist League, the Unity campaign and the Popular Front campaign. Nor was it in this case. The explanation of his appointment is simple. He was convinced that India should be free. He was convinced that an agreement could be made with the Indian leaders as to the ways and means and time that Indian freedom should be attained. He was convinced that he, of all men in Britain, had the best qualifications to win the co-operation of the Indian leaders to ensure the agreement. To accomplish that now, in this hour of crisis, was an urgent and necessary service to the winning of the war. Under such circumstances and with such views, calculations as to his future career meant nothing to him. And these were the reasons for his appointment as a special envoy to India.

## CHAPTER 17

### MISSION TO INDIA

**W**HEN Stafford Cripps returned from India in 1940, he stated:

"There is an immediate danger of an outbreak of non-co-operation by the Indian people, as a result of the British Government's refusal to grant self-government to the Indian people and the right to decide their own future."

Some of his friends on the "Left" now tried to dissuade him from going to India. Some members of Trade Union branches and local Labour Parties were suspicious of the motives of the Government.

Certainly there were grounds for suspicion. The terms he was to offer to the Indian leaders had not been announced. The Prime Minister, Mr Churchill, had never hidden his light under a bushel or failed to make it clear that he was against Indian independence. Had the entrance of Stafford Cripps into the War Cabinet produced some wondrous change in this old war-horse of British Imperialism, or was Stafford lending himself innocently to the blandishments of diplomacy?

*The Times* said of him and his mission.

"He is certainly aware of the difficulties which lie before him. He is not a man to be daunted by those that are real, or to tolerate for a moment those that are merely the product of ill-will, misunderstanding, or red tape. Whether or not he achieves success, he will have deserved it. And he has deserved, and will receive, the gratitude both of India and of his own country."

But the problem was far less simple than the British public realised. When Stafford Cripps left India on Christmas Day, 1939, the war seemed a long way from India and the Indian Congress leaders not only denounced Britain for declaring India at war without consulting the Indian people, but were insisting that any joint defence of India against an external enemy must be preceded by India achieving independence. There was no

difference between Indian and Moslem on that issue. But there was a division between Gandhi and many of his supporters and the Congress leadership on the issue of the war. Nehru and the majority of the Working Committee rejected Gandhi's pacifism, and while Gandhi proceeded to preach pacifism the Congress initiated a movement which probably arose from Nehru's study of the Irish Sinn Fein struggle during the war of 1914-18. The Sinn Feiners formed their own organs of Government and set up a parallel Government to that of the British. But the Irish had no illusions about where non-co-operation and passive resistance led to. They knew quite well that sooner or later there would be a trial of strength between the two authorities and someone would have to capitulate or be knocked out. Hence, passive resistance was for them a weapon of preparation, a matter of expediency and not of principle. The Indians had seen in their own experience the limitations of pacifism as a means of struggle in the great upheaval of 1929-32, but it is doubtful whether they had shaken off the habits of their yesterdays. This is seen in their attitude to Gandhi at this stage.

In June, 1940, immediately after the collapse of France and Pétain's armistice, Gandhi wrote in his paper.

"I think French statesmen have shown rare courage in bowing to the inevitable and refusing to be a party to senseless mutual slaughter."

Then on July 3rd when a German attack on Britain seemed imminent he sent a message to the British War Cabinet begging them and every Briton to adopt a "nobler and braver way" of fighting and let Hitler and Mussolini "take possession of your beautiful island if they wish".

The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress did not share this ultra-pacifist view.

"The Committee," said its resolution of June 21st, "are unable to go the full length with Gandhi, but they recognise that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue."

The programme went on to outline an independent defence organisation of public security throughout the country, through Congress Committees and individuals. This was a reversion to the technique of "parallelism". But while thus denouncing co-operation with the Government it went on to offer co-operation on terms. It demanded the "full independence of India" and the formation of a "provisional National Government" to give



effect to it. This provisional Government should be so constituted as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of responsible Governments in the Provinces. On these conditions the Congress was prepared to "throw its full weight into organising the defence of India".

The situation was not made less difficult when Mr. Winston Churchill bluntly stated that the Atlantic Charter was not intended to apply to India. Mr. K. Goshal, in *The People of India*, writes

"In August, 1941, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met at sea and drew up the Atlantic Charter. Though the Indians had few illusions left about the value of promises, they nevertheless saw a faint ray of hope in the third point of the Charter, which pledged 'to respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live, and . . . to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them'. Their hope was based upon the prestige of the United States, and especially of President Roosevelt, whom the Indians greatly admired for his liberalism.

"But, outspoken Tory that he was, Mr. Churchill on his return to London explained that 'the joint declaration does not qualify in any way the various statements which have been made from time to time about development of constitutional Government in India, Burma, or any other part of the British Empire'."

Had things remained as they were after that statement, then the Cripps Mission was utterly doomed before it set sail.

However, all things move and three things happened in quick succession. First the Government released unconditionally those who had been imprisoned in the course of the passive resistance movement. This led to the second event of importance. One of the released was C. Rajagopalachari, known better and more affectionately to his friends and admirers as "Rajaji". At one time he was Prime Minister of Madras, a lifelong colleague of Gandhi and a man with a keen intellect and strong character. On his release he took issue with Gandhi on the Working Committee of Congress and declared that political issues should not be mixed up with Gandhi's non-violence ideology. He said that "if the party's political issues were conceded by the Government, then it should assume responsibility and wage war against the Axis powers".

The third event shocked not only India but the whole world. The Japanese struck at Pearl Harbour and set forth "on the road to Mandalay" and India too.

“Rajaji” then talked the Working Committee of Congress into a typically English compromise. His demands were to secure from the Government a broad recognition of India’s right to independence and the giving effect to that recognition, *as much as possible*, during the war. At the Committee meeting where he made this proposal the official report said he secured an “overwhelming majority”. Actually he received forty-five votes against fifteen with 140 members not voting.

Yet one other event of importance preceded the coming of Cripps on his second visit. Marshal and Madame Chiang Kai-shek arrived on the scene. Mr T. A. Raman says of this visit:

“Evidently the main purpose of the visit was to talk to India’s political leaders, to urge the importance of a united front against Japan and to demonstrate friendly interest of the head of a powerful state in the cause of Indian self-government. After the official reception by the Viceroy, the review of the troops and so on, China’s Generalissimo had several meetings with leaders of all sections and parties, the longest ones with Pandit Nehru, who had visited him in 1939. Gandhi met him towards the end of the visit and they had a conversation of no less than four hours and a half at Calcutta. Judging from the account in the *Hanjan* by Gandhi’s secretary, the Mahatma dilated at length on passive resistance and asserted that it could be used effectively against armed invasion. The Generalissimo said gently that non-violence may be useful in certain circumstances and against certain enemies, but not against the Japanese. They would not—he suggested—let Gandhi propagate his faith and would make short work of any attempt at organised opposition. Gandhi however maintained his ground.

“It is not surprising that Madame Chiang Kai-shek praised Nehru as a great man with a world vision, but described Gandhi as too obsessed with the national struggle to possess a world outlook—and also as ‘a person of cloudy vision.’ ”

It had not been difficult up to now, indeed it had been too easy, for the Indian Congress to subordinate their views on the world struggle against Fascism and Nazism to the issue of Indian independence. But when the Japanese came crashing along from the east and approached India it was not so easy. With the announcement that Cripps was to go to India on a Cabinet Mission, there came most intense excitement and anticipation on all sides. It was understood that Cripps had expressed a desire to meet four to six representatives of the Congress about a week after his arrival. Before this the Congress Working Committee had agreed that its President alone, Doctor Azad, should meet

him, but by the time Cripps arrived, it seemed likely that Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Nehru, Mr. Rajagopalachari, Mr. Patel and Mr. Desai would also see him.

The climax of this preliminary building-up came when Stafford Cripps arrived in Delhi on March 23rd, accompanied by Mr. Frank Turnbull of the India Office, Mr. David Owen and Mr. Graham Spry, who were secretaries to the Mission. The Mission had left England by air on the 21st March, and was giving to the world, and to India in particular, the impression that everything was cut and dried, and in true Crippsian style had been settled "the day before yesterday". He announced on his arrival that he intended to complete his mission in fourteen days and said that he believed that in that time, with energy and goodwill, the essentials of success could be achieved.

He began his enquiries at once and plunged into meetings and discussions from the moment of his arrival. His secretarial staff took over completely from the Viceregal staff, which had made all the preliminary arrangements, and in the first place Cripps began talks with those in authority both in central and provincial Governments, as a prelude to meeting the party leaders.

Cripps himself described his procedure to the British House of Commons on April 28th. He said then:

"Let me now say a word about the manner of conducting these discussions. I was most anxious that there should be no suspicion whatever that His Majesty's Government were handpicking those whom I saw, and consequently I asked the main organisations themselves to appoint those whom they wished to meet me. Thus they did, and they mostly expressed the wish that I should not interview any other members of their Working Committees. Certain individuals I saw such as Mr. Gandhi, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Joshi and Mr. Kaya Kar, the present or past Prime Ministers of all the Provincial Governments, the Governors of the Provinces and lastly, but by no means least, the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. It was to this latter body that I first disclosed the details of the draft Declaration, immediately on my arrival in India, and after seeing them each one individually, it was to the same body I first announced the failure of the agreement. As the House will know, I kept the draft Declaration from publication for the first week of my stay in Delhi, during which time I submitted it to all the principal Indian representative leaders personally. It then became clear that its contents were becoming generally known, and it was considered better that it should be published, and this was done."

So all the procedure was correct. No one could cast a stone at

him on that score. And the proposals were water-tight. There was no room for manœuvring with the Indians. The Indians had to say "yes" or "no" to the proposals as a whole. Stafford himself spoke with conviction of the Declaration.

The talks with the party leaders began on March 25th, and Stafford was in his element. First he saw Dr. Azad, the President of the Congress Party, and then Mr. Jinnah, President of the Moslem League. But he was quite sure that the key man was Mr. Gandhi. The next day he telegraphed to Mr. Gandhi saying he would be glad to have an opportunity of having a talk with him. He received the following reply:

"Thanks for your wire. I was present at the meeting of the Working Committee when it was agreed that on behalf of the Congress only the President and Pandit Nehru should see you. You know my anti-all-war views. If despite that you would like to see me I shall be glad to see you."

Cripps replied that he expected to see Mr. Gandhi the following day. Thus it happened that Cripps and Gandhi met before the publication of the Cabinet plan for India.

That interview lasted two hours. Gandhi had travelled specially from his home in Wardha and when he arrived at Stafford Cripps' house, Cripps went down the steps and opened the door of Gandhi's car. After the interview both were cheerful and Mr. Gandhi facetiously remarked that he had taken a vow of silence and could not indicate what they had discussed. One sensed however that the old lawyer-politician had enjoyed himself and not given anything away to the younger one. Louis Fischer reports an interview he had later with Gandhi, and records that Gandhi said of this interview with Cripps:

"When Cripps arrived he sent me a telegram asking me to come to see him in Delhi. I did not wish to go, but I went because I thought it would do some good. I had heard rumours about the contents of the British Government's offer he brought to India, but I had not seen the offer. He gave it to me and after a brief study, I said to him, 'Why did you come if this is what you have to offer? If this is your entire proposal to India, I would advise you to take the next plane home.' Cripps replied, 'I will consider that.'"

What then was the document which produced this complete and outspoken and, one might add, contemptuous dismissal of the Mission and its message? Here it is in all its detail

"His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of the promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

"His Majesty's Government therefore make the following declaration

- (a) Immediately on the cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.
- (b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to

- (i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides. With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as The Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.
- (ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other member states of the British Commonwealth

"Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

- (d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of the Indian Union in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities the entire membership of the lower Houses of the Provincial legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members

- (e) During the critical period which now faces India, and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth, and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India "

Gandhi is reported to have said of this document when asked by Cripps for his reactions to the plan: "If the Congress President asks my advice, I will say that the British proposals form a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank." What Cripps said in reply to the downright statements of Gandhi we do not know. The Working Committee of Congress held a meeting the day after the publication of the plan. So also the Working Committee of the Moslem League. Not a single member of the Congress Committee was in favour of acceptance of the proposals as they stood. But Cripps was not in a position to manœuvre, to accept suggestions or make modifications. He had come to persuade them to accept the plan as a whole. That was the instruction given to Cripps, the delegate. Nevertheless they went on talking.

All the members of the Congress Committee spoke at their meeting—with the exception of Gandhi and Azad. Gandhi in fact was not present—he was keeping a day of silence. What is the inside story? Nehru saw Cripps twice that day. He dined with him in the evening, before Cripps' broadcast. He was the only person who could have offset the influence of Gandhi. One cannot help feeling that this day, Monday, March 30th, was the most important day of all, and that Pandit Nehru was the focal point of what was happening.

Nehru has himself written of his first reactions to the plan. He says

"I remember that when I read those proposals for the first time I was profoundly depressed and that depression was largely due to the fact that I had expected something more substantial from Sir Stafford Cripps as well as from the critical situation that had arisen. When analysed there were so many limitations, and the very principle of self-determination was fettered and circumscribed in such a way as to imperil our future."

The plan of the British Government was obviously divided into two parts. The first part dealt with the future constitution and its making. The second dealt with the, then, present. The first part was definitely what Gandhi described as a "post-dated cheque", the date being—the cessation of hostilities. That in itself was an advance on the nebulous dates that had beclouded the horizon of Indian independence hitherto. The nature of what was written on the cheque would decide whether it was a fraud or not. What Gandhi read as being written on the cheque caused him to turn from it in contempt. What Nehru, who was the next key man in the situation, read as being written on the cheque gave him a deep depression.

But there was another part to the plan which dealt with the immediate situation. This said that because there was a war on the Indians must continue in subjection and fight the battle of freedom with the British but under the British, willingly accepting their subordination as of yore. What the Indians had demanded was freedom immediately, and the alliance of a free people with their own National Government in alliance with Britain and her allies against the Axis powers. Both Sir Stafford Cripps and the British Government were emphatic that the Indian proposals were impossible of application because they would mean an alteration in the constitution of Britain and of India. A thing like that couldn't be done in war-time, although

war-time in history appeared to most people to be just the time when such changes had been made. Indeed the Indians and the rest of the world had, a few months previous to the coming of the Cripps Mission to India, witnessed Britain herself offering an entirely new constitution to collapsing France involving the most profound alterations to the constitution of Britain.

What Nehru thought of the plan of "post-dated" freedom he wrote in a book while in prison some months later. An extract is given here because it sums up the Mission as it appeared to one of the chief actors in the drama.

"The proposals dealt essentially with the future, after the cessation of hostilities, though there was a final clause which vaguely invited co-operation in the present. That future, while asserting the principle of self-determination, gave the right to provinces not to join the Indian Union, and to form separate independent states. Further the same right of non-accession to the Indian Union was given to the Indian States and it should be remembered that there are nearly six hundred such states in India, some major ones and the great majority tiny enclaves. These states, as well as the provinces, would all join in the constitution-making, would influence that constitution and then could walk out of it. The elections in the provinces for the constitution-making body would take place under the existing system of separate religious electorates; that was unfortunate, as it would bring with it the old spirit of cleavage, and yet in the circumstances that was inevitable. But in the states there was no provision for elections and their ninety million inhabitants were completely ignored. The semi-feudal rulers of the states could nominate their own representatives in proportion to the population. These nominees would be able ministers, but, as a whole, they would inevitably be representative of the feudal rulers. The constituent assembly or constitution-making body would be a curious mixture of elected and non-elected elements, the former chosen by separate religious electorates as well as by certain vested interests, the latter nominated by the rulers of the states. To this had to be added the fact that there would be no pressure to accept joint decisions, and the sense of reality which comes from evolving integrated and final decisions would be lacking. The tendency for many of its members would be to act in a wholly irresponsible manner, for they would feel that they could always withdraw and refuse to accept the responsibility for carrying out those decisions."

Stafford Cripps had obviously run up against minds as acute as his own and neither Gandhi nor Nehru could be won over either with a post-dated cheque of that kind or emotional



appeals for unity against the Fascist powers. Once that fundamental difference became clear, and it was clear from the moment the Indian leaders read the document, all subsequent discussion could only take the form of elucidating details and a mutual searching for points of vantage in justification of each other's position. The Princes came to ask Sir Stafford for elucidation on some points. They wanted to know what would be the position of the states whose representatives might not be satisfied with the constitution as drafted by the proposed Constituent Assembly, and wished to ask Cripps whether such states could form a separate Union. The Executive of the Indian States' Subjects Conference regretted that no arrangements had been made to present the case of the Indian States' peoples in the Constituent Assembly. The Radical Democratic Party led by Mr. Roy, the ex-Communist leader, came out strongly in favour of the plan, but as he had no following of significance his favour was not helpful. Another favourable view was expressed by Sir Sikander Hyat-Khan, Premier of the Punjab, who felt that the British proposals were based on justice and that any party rejecting them would take the risk of turning world opinion against it.

On the evening of Monday, March 30th, Cripps stepped from the conference room to broadcast to the Indian peoples. Froom Tyler, writing of this event in his study, *Cripps: A Portrait and a Prospect*, writes

"The earnest persuasive voice which had pleasantly surprised British fireside listeners one Sunday night in the previous winter was now heard through India explaining the British offer. Cripps made full use of the radio. He realised that, although only five million of India's 390,000,000 could read newspapers, they could all listen to loud-speakers, although almost 90 per cent of the entire population were country dwellers, his voice, or the voice of the interpreters, could go out to them and they could be acquainted with the mighty issues which were being decided for them by their leaders in Delhi. So immediately after the proposals had been made public Cripps broadcast to the Indian people, and his voice was heard in the bazaars, in remotest villages, in the houses of the rich Anglo-Indians, and in the clubs and hotel lounges where Indian Civil Service officials and British businessmen, whose personal future was involved with the political future of India, sat sweltering over their chota-pegs. It was the voice of the Motherland offering freedom to four-fifths of her subjects. It was the voice of the new world 'of organised and co-operative freedom' in which Cripps passionately believed."

That was the effect on a British journalist. It did not have the effect suggested on the Indian people. It would require much more than the charm of Stafford's voice to work the miracle of transformation involved in making England into the "Motherland" of the Indians.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless Stafford did deliver a powerful speech in keeping with his Mission, full of "promise" and "responsibility" and challenge. He said:

"The British Government want to make it beyond doubt that we and the British people desire the Indian people to have full self-government

"We desire the Indian constitution to be as free in every respect as that of Great Britain or as that of any of the Dominions

"The principle on which the proposals are based is that the new constitution should be formed by the elected representatives of the Indian people

"The British people are determined to do their utmost for the defence of India, in which they are confident the Indian peoples are eager to play their full part

" . . . Britain hopes and expects to see an Indian Union strong and united because it is founded on the free consent of all its peoples."

"It is in the hands of the Indians only whether they accept the lead which Britain is giving them

"If the Indians fail to accept this opportunity the responsibility for that failure must rest with them.

"If the British proposals are rejected there would be neither the time nor opportunity to reconsider the matter until after the war. . ."

The next day the arduous discussions continued. Gandhi and Nehru were drafting the conclusions of the Congress Party for consideration on the following morning's meeting of the Working Committee. The Working Committee of the Moslem League again adjourned without finishing its discussions.

The discussions shifted from the future to the present. How much share in the responsibility for defence was contained in the proposals for immediate co-operation? The Indians wanted full responsibility. The British document said—partial responsibility. So—how much? Cripps on that day—March 31st—was reported to have told Indian leaders that the Viceroy was willing to have a Defence Minister, with restricted functions, on the Executive Council. Such a member would have no control over strategy, which would be the concern of the Commander-in-Chief, under the direction of the War Cabinet in London. Doctor Azad, on behalf of Congress, expressed the opinion that Congress could not appeal to the Indian masses to treat the war

as their own problem if the National Government had no voice in the management of defence. Unless defence matters were placed in the hands of an Indian member he could not support the British proposals "Rajaji" told a correspondent that distrust on this question of defence was likely to wreck the entire scheme as well as endanger the safety of India.

Cripps asked Nehru, and Azad of the Congress Party, to meet him again on April 2nd. He was expected to place before them a formula which he had already discussed with Moderate leaders. This was understood to envisage an Indian Defence Minister to preside over a Defence Council, of which General Wavell would also be a member. The portfolio would also cover civil defence and air-raid precautions. It was said too that Cripps had been in touch with London by 'phone, and had made it clear that all parties were demanding a bigger share in defence.

Then came Thursday evening, April 2nd, when the Congress Party gave its reply to Cripps in the form of a resolution. It was handed to Cripps by Nehru and Azad. It indicated that the party objected to the proposals on three main grounds: refusal to transfer the Defence portfolio to Indian hands, the impairment of national unity implied in the proposal which gave each province the right to secede from the Indian Union; and the fact that the Indian States would be represented in the Constituent Assembly by "palace nominees" and not by subjects. It was believed that the reply did not close the door to negotiations.

The next day, Cripps met General Wavell at Army Headquarters, and at his press conference that day he announced the postponement of his departure from India. He had suddenly become optimistic, for he said:

"I think I can possibly do something useful next week. I think one may generally say that the points of difficulty are coming down to fairly narrow limits, and with common goodwill we may be able to solve the difficulties. I want to try to do that."

On April 4th Stafford Cripps introduced Nehru and Azad to General Wavell and left them to talk over the question of the Defence portfolio. Gandhi left for his home in Wardha, having nothing more to say. During the week-end Cripps saw members of the Government and Air Vice-Marshal Collier. It was understood that on the Tuesday he would announce the result of the Mission. This was postponed until Wednesday. On the Tuesday, Cripps handed to Azad and Nehru the British War Cabinet's reply to the Party's counter-proposals. That interview lasted only eight

minutes. It was clear that the climax of the drama was at hand. Into the picture stepped Colonel Johnson, personal representative of President Roosevelt, to see if he could render any service. He saw Nehru and Azad. Then Cripps saw Jinnah and afterwards Jinnah made a statement that it was clearly understood that the Defence portfolio would be administered by an Indian. Excitement was mounting. Was there agreement after all? Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee had considered the British Government's reply at a four-hour meeting in the afternoon, and had reached a decision. Azad told the Press that their reply would be communicated to Cripps the following morning. But discussions continued throughout the following day. A new formula appeared to have emerged from the talks, based upon the position in Australia, where General MacArthur was Supreme Commander while Mr. Forde was Commonwealth Army Minister with powers and responsibility over distinct and clearly-defined fields. This was being discussed by the Congress and Moslem League Working Committees. Colonel Johnson appeared to be taking a big part in keeping the negotiations going.

April 9th was still another day of negotiations of which the world knew nothing. Cripps saw Azad and Nehru at a lengthy meeting in the evening. Final issues were clearly under discussion.

It had become as clear as daylight from the details of the negotiations, what was obvious from the document the moment it was handed to the Indian leaders and published to the world—the British Government were not prepared to yield one inch of power to the Indians *now* and wanted their willing co-operation as complete subordinates on the strength of a "post-dated cheque" of a questionable character. Neither the earnest advocacy of Stafford, nor his drive, nor his eloquence could persuade the Indian leaders that there was more than this in the proposals he had brought. Indeed the more Nehru and Azad drew out the details of the proposed Defence portfolio which the Indians were to hold, the more hollow appeared the proposal and the deeper became Indian suspicions of the whole scheme. Congress agreed without hesitation that the responsibility for strategy and control of operations should be in the hands of General Wavell, but what could be expected from them when they discovered the functions which would fall to the Indian Defence Member? He was to attend to canteens, stationery, supply of petroleum, amenities of the troops, schools, demobilisation after

the war, the entertainment of foreign missions, relations with the press, the evacuation of threatened areas and the co-ordination of signals!

The Working Committee delivered its final letter, which closed on the old note of bitterness and distrust which had been sounded so often before the Mission came, but for nearly three happy weeks had been hushed. It said:

"Unhappily, even in this grave hour of peril, the British Government is unable to give up its wrecking policy. We are driven to the conclusion that it attaches more importance to holding on to its rule in India as long as it can and promoting discord and disruption here with that end in view than to an effective defence of India against the aggression and invasion that overhang it."

To this attack Sir Stafford made no rejoinder. The breach was obviously past mending. He held his last press conference on the morning of April 11th. He explained that as the Congress and the League and other bodies had rejected the draft Declaration, it would now be withdrawn. On that day too he made over the wireless a farewell address to the people of India which was relayed around the world. He said.

"You will have heard that the draft Declaration which I brought to India on behalf of the War Cabinet and which I explained to you the last time I spoke over the wireless has been rejected by your leaders. I am sad that this great opportunity of rallying India for her defence and her freedom has been missed."

"In the past the British Governments have been accused of using vague terms to cloak a lack of purpose; and when they stated that it must be left to the Indian communities to agree among themselves it has been said that this was only a device by which Great Britain might indefinitely retain its control over India. But Congress since the outbreak of war has repeatedly demanded two essentials as a basis for its support of the allied effort in the war: first, a declaration of Indian independence, and second, a Constituent Assembly to frame a new constitution for India. Both of these demands find their place in the draft Declaration. . . ."

He expressed his profound regret that the British offer had been turned down and then appealed to India to willingly join in the struggle against the common enemy. He continued:

"Now is the time for India and her people to join their courage, their strength and their endurance in this great heroic and world-wide army of the common people, and to take her part in those smashing blows for

victory against brutality and aggression which shall for ever free the masses from the age-long fear and tragedy of war”

Stafford Cripps left for home the next day. (April 12)

There is an epilogue to this chapter which cannot be ignored. A few days later he rose in the House of Commons, which was full to capacity, to report to the members. He said in a masterly survey that the difficulties which arose in his negotiations

“fell under three heads. First were those relating to the method of determining the new constitution, second were those relating to defence, third were those relating to the general form of the interim Government.

“First was the use of the word ‘Dominion’. This was not a matter of prime importance.”

It is difficult for the outsider to understand why, if there is no difference between “Dominion Status” and “Independence”, the British Government and Sir Stafford were so reluctant to use the word “Independence”.

The second objection, he said,

“was a most substantial one. That was the right of non-accession of the Provinces after the new constitution had been decided upon by a constitution-making Assembly.”

In this relation he asked the members to study the two resolutions of Congress and the Moslem League and then to look at the draft Declaration. They would come to the conclusion that the draft Declaration did no more than Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders had constantly stated they were prepared to do, that was to keep open the issue of Pakistan, and they would also realise that the scheme for the draft Declaration was as far a compromise as possible between the two extreme views. . . .

The third and last objection under that head was as regards the position of the Indian States. . . Congress had protested not against the Indian States coming into the constitution-making authority, but against their representatives being nominated by the rulers and not elected by the people. . . . After expressing how desirable such a change was, Stafford said:

“But for the moment, we can only deal with the situation as it exists historically. . . .”

He went on.

“However, none of these three differences with the Congress Working Committee would have been decisive of a negative result. The final question which was raised at my last and long meeting with the President of the Congress and Pandit Nehru was as to the form of the temporary Government that should be in power until the end of the war and the coming into operation of the new constitution. I had from the outset made it clear to all those whom I saw that it was not possible to make any constitutional changes—except of the most insignificant kind—prior to the new constitution which would come into operation as a result of the labours of the constitution-making assembly.”

Then he proceeded.

“The question as to the formation of a new Government and how the members of the Viceroy’s Executive should be treated and how the business therein should be conducted were, of course, essential matters for the Viceroy, who had to carry on the Government of India, and not for me as a member of the War Cabinet on a visit to India . . .”

So the delegate completed his report and handed in his mandate. No one laid the blame at his door that the Mission had failed. Indeed tributes were paid to him from every side. While, on this occasion, there was no glory of a well-won triumph surrounding his presence as he stood before the Commons of England, there was a universal appreciation of the fact that where he had failed, no one in their midst could have succeeded. He resumed his duties as the Leader of the House and Lord Privy Seal.

The clash of arms was still proceeding.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE MINISTER OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION

STAFFORD CRIPPS had not long returned from his mission to India, and resumed his work as Leader of the House of Commons, when Mr. Churchill made some Cabinet changes involving the switching over of Cripps to two new and extremely important jobs. He became Minister of Aircraft Production and chairman of the scientific research committees concerned with radio and methods of defeating the submarine. These new jobs meant political demotion from the War Cabinet, although he would remain a member of the Government. The Prime Minister himself described the change as solely due to "a most serious war need". Others, although surprised by the change, read into it that there had been some clash between Churchill and Cripps.

It is true that there had been some differences of opinion between Cripps and the Prime Minister. Cripps had asked to be relieved of his membership of the War Cabinet but at Churchill's request had refrained from pressing his differences beyond Cabinet level. 1942 was a year of continuing reverses for the Allied forces and Churchill desired that their differences should not be made public at a time when major military operations were pending. After the launching of the North African offensive and the victory of El Alamein, Churchill's prestige was so high and public morale so elevated that changes in the Government could be made without any untoward reflections on the Government or the Prime Minister. It was then that Cripps was appointed Minister of Aircraft Production.

Churchill has a high opinion of Stafford Cripps. He regards him "as a great loyal gentleman of high intellectual ability", indeed as the one man "of outstanding intellect in the Labour Party", and a most loyal colleague in Government. He thought it a magnificent act of patriotism and loyalty when at his request Stafford agreed not to press their divergence of views. As Winston Churchill remarked to the author, "everyone knows



what political capital can be made out of such an occasion". He thought Stafford most suitable for the post of Minister of Aircraft Production and had remembered Cripps' great experience at Queensferry during the First World War and his remarkable capacity for handling facts "And the more facts he has to deal with the better," said Churchill puckishly, "since everybody knows Cripps' capacity for work "

Cripps had all the necessary qualifications but one for the post of Minister of Aircraft Production—he had no previous experience as a Minister in charge of a Government Department. He therefore welcomed the appointment although it created a sensation within the Ministry and within the industry. Many employers hated him. The permanent staff—under-secretaries, experts and civil servants—were curious and not a little alarmed, knowing him only by repute. One leading new colleague exclaimed "We're all right now, because we have briefed the best counsel in the Cabinet "

Churchill, who had appointed him, had no doubts about the wisdom of his choice. The Ministry of Aircraft Production was formed during and because of an acute crisis in 1940. The circumstances of its creation had a considerable influence, both direct and indirect, on its functions and structure and on its relations with the aircraft industry.

*The Aircraft Builder* says:

"The M.A.P., like all other big wartime Ministries, was a very different thing and very much bigger and more complicated than an ordinary peace-time Ministry. It was, in fact, a peace-time Ministry to which had been added the task of planning for and controlling in considerable detail a huge industry. The people who formed its staff naturally reflected this dual function. On the one hand they might be professional Civil Servants, on the other, they might be business-men or technical specialists "

In addition to the central organisation in London, there was a regional organisation, there being twelve regions with a Regional Controller in each of them. Resident Ministry of Aircraft Production representatives were also appointed in most of the larger factories. It should be remembered that throughout the war aircraft production was by far the biggest industry in the country. Moreover its requirements were ever changing, improvements and modifications and new types of aircraft were continually being introduced, and the whole industry was

subject to the ceaseless demands of changes in strategy in the conduct of the war.

None of Stafford's predecessors had reigned long in his new post. Lord Beaverbrook was the first to hold it—for two weeks less than one year. Moore-Brabazon held it from May 1941 to February 1942 and Llewellyn from that date to November of the same year. So there was an element of challenge in the appointment. However that might be, it is certain that no one in the Ministry of Aircraft Production felt at any time that they had come under the control of a novice. With characteristic speed Cripps swiftly made himself thoroughly acquainted with the Ministry, its structure, staff and problems. Nor was he content to have all the data on paper. Good management meant for him personal contact with staff, managements and men and effective co-operation with all of them. It was not long before his colleagues and under-secretaries recognised that here was no ordinary person. Sir Wilfrid Freeman, the Chief Executive under him, says Stafford was "the most punctual man I have met in my life". Sir Edwin Plowden thought him "the best Minister I ever knew". He worked all under him to the limit of their capacity, but his own capacity seemed unlimited. Freeman says:

"He was the only Minister I know who, if you gave him papers to read, no matter how long or how difficult, first thing in the morning I'd have them back."

George Blaker, who worked with him as Private Secretary later at the Board of Trade, and was to undertake journeys to India and China for him in 1946, has said:

"I remember very well my first day working for Stafford Cripps. It was a busy day, not much connected with ordinary administrative work, and at the end of it there was a pile of urgent papers to a depth of several inches requiring his attention. He said 'If we don't finish our work during the day, let us take it home, and it will be done by the morning.' It always was done by the morning. I have never met anyone with such a capacity for quick, thorough work. When I discovered that he habitually worked until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to achieve this result, and still got up early, the papers had to be strictly rationed, in the hope he would get more sleep."

Another says of him: "Cripps is an extraordinarily clever man and has a tremendous capacity for work. He is busy every moment and amazes us with all the subjects he tackles. Yet he

never fusses. If you are going to a meeting you don't have to worry 'Has he got his papers?' and he doesn't turn round saying 'Where's this and where's that?' When he goes on to the platform he is the master of the subject."

Yet another says of him that "Stafford is essentially a research student, scientist and experimentalist. He is a great believer in using the expert, the technician. But the picture of 'Austerity Cripps' is a Press 'phoney' In the small circle of people with whom he works he is warm, human, friendly and understanding and has a great sense of humour and a gift for pulling with the team. In big meetings his brain takes over and he can't give the time for a little joke because the momentum is on. He is intellectually far superior to others and is impatient of obstacles."

Of course there are criticisms of him too for not conceding enough to the stupidity of people. One says that he makes the mistake of thinking that when he has defeated a person in argument he has convinced him. But all bear testimony to the fact that in an exceedingly short time the man who had become the Minister of Aircraft Production without previous Ministerial responsibility for a Department of State had become an outstanding administrator leading the largest war-time industry of two million workers with great skill and wisdom.

It is one thing to get to grips with the personnel of a Government Department and another to establish similar good relations with the managements of private industry and the workers in it.

"It is fair to say," reads an extract from the *Aircraft Builder*, "that by and large, management in the aircraft industry consisted of highly capable, energetic industrialists of considerable individuality, who had strong views on most subjects, and naturally particularly strong views on all things connected with the production of aircraft. These firms between them virtually represented the sum of the country's knowledge and experience in this field. They knew it, and were rightly proud of it."

The demands made on these firms at the outbreak of war was enormous.

The important thing however was the entirely new factor in the situation wherein these highly capable and individualistic managements were called upon to accept direction and control in many matters from a central Ministry. It is true that much of the staff of the Ministry on its technical side was necessarily drawn from the industry itself, but the partnership which in the end developed between the Ministry and the many firms of

varying sizes was not only a remarkable achievement in itself but a tribute to Cripps' capacity as an administrator. Incidentally, the experience gave Cripps considerable insight into possible methods which could be used after the war for controlling an industry without nationalising it. His "planning mind" seized upon this experience with enthusiasm and would soon colour his views about Socialism.

In 1943 he convened a national conference of representatives from the management and workers in the industry. Here he revealed his mastery of his job as its Minister in charge.

He first sought to make everyone conscious of the aircraft industry's place in the strategy of war. Then he passed on to the place of the Ministry itself, its functions and duties in relation to the industry. "The Department," he said, "was not to set up as a producing body, its purpose being to co-ordinate the whole activity of the aircraft industry and to facilitate, by planning and the creation and allocation of capacity, the maximum programme. There were of course a number of shadow factories owned by the Ministry as well as some others it had taken over, but from an administrative point of view these were operated through independent managements very much as though they were independent concerns." Cripps then gave a detailed account of the lay-out of the Ministry and its various divisions.

He dealt with the Ministry and the industry, speaking of phasing, planning, the number of different types of aircraft under production, and materials, then changes in the programme, the incorporation of modifications, spares, the repair organisation, sub-contracting, and then some difficulties. For he spoke like an expert.

He had to meet some criticisms concerning his action in taking over a firm and putting in his own management. His reply on this occasion had no ambiguity about it. He said:

"Our regional officers are constantly in touch with firms within their districts with a view to intervening where necessary. The Production Efficiency Board *which I set up when I joined the Ministry* has a general power to enquire into the efficiency of firms and to give them every assistance in coming up to standard, if they are not efficiently managed.

"The extreme case of putting in a Controller or even taking over a firm, is only resorted to where other measures have proved ineffective. I shall not of course hesitate to take appropriate action wherever it is necessary. . . ."

Having disposed of that, he went on:

"In this industry to-day we have a great tripartite partnership, the Ministry of Aircraft Production, the management and the workers, and our success will be the greater, the closer the harmony between the three partners . . ."

From the heights of his Department and management he came down to the man on the job in the factory. He said:

"I have no doubt that Joint Production Committees afford a new and most valuable opportunity for the exchange of views on all production matters between the management and the workers in a factory. I think that my interest in the Committees is probably well-known to you, and I shall certainly never be backward in showing any gratitude to them for the very excellent work they are doing in helping to secure increased efficiency and production. I have now had a very considerable experience of them, having attended between one hundred and fifty and two hundred in my visits round the country, and although they vary somewhat in personnel they are, by and large, working very successfully for a new institution . . .

"This new weapon of industrial democracy is now part of our democratic way of life. It is of the greatest importance that we should develop the Production Committees on right lines as a permanent part of our industrial structure."

To this conference he outlined the whole course of his work.

From the moment Cripps became Minister of Aircraft Production to the end of the war he preached these themes unceasingly and helped to put them into practice on a scale such as obtained in no other industry. In his direct contact with those employed in the aircraft industry the Cripps "partnership" worked industriously. Isobel Cripps went with him on hundreds of visits to factories. Stafford's secretary, Allan Jarvis, recalls this in a letter, in which he writes:

"I remember the part she played in the many factory tours he went on. While Stafford was discussing engineering and production with the management and technicians (showing a technical grasp which astonished the professionals) Isobel could usually be found in some remote quiet corner with the women workers or some group of young people. She was very sure in her grasp of the importance of the human factor in industry, quick to assess the 'morale' of any shop and to sense the mood of the work people, and she could therefore accurately report to the Minister on this aspect of their work. They were both of them agreed on its importance and it was of inestimable value to Stafford to have this help from Isobel, for the pressure of time kept his attention focused on

the technical side Isobel has been of immense assistance She somehow finds time to see and talk to, sometimes at very great length, an incredibly large number of people, always with a view to creating or sustaining their feeling that they are working as part of a common cause Always she shows infinite patience and understanding in smoothing out relationships between the frequently highly charged and temperamental people involved It is through this extension of his influence through her activity and her very effective projection of both their personalities that Stafford has been able to exercise his power of leadership and inspiration over such a diverse range of interests—religion, education, health and housing, the arts, music, films and the theatre It is an incredible achievement and it is the partnership as such which deserves the credit ”

Two years after he had taken on the job Stafford reported:

“The manpower employed by the aircraft industry, and all the subsidiary industries which go to making aircraft accessories, has increased about twenty times . The proportion of women employed in the industry has risen 40 per cent In the last twelve months the industry has turned out 27,273 aeroplanes The weight of airframes produced from March 1943 to March 1944 was fifty times greater than in 1936, seven times the weight of 1939, and not far short of four times that in 1940 ”

In these eventful years he was also chairman of the Radio Board. It was not until the war was over that its work was revealed to the public. One day in September, 1945, he told a press conference the story of the evolution of Radar, which had reached its highest point of development during the war, and of the wonderful team of scientists who had concentrated on the various aspects of the problems of radio-location and produced the marvellous mechanisms which enabled the pilots of every kind of craft to find their objective in the dark, through the fogs and in the sea.

Once he had got into his stride with his departmental duties and felt he was the master of them, and those under his direction were “going his way”, he began to express himself on other matters.

He continued to develop his approach to Christianity and politics. His theme was always the same—he wanted practical Christianity which worked seven days a week and was not merely a Sunday soporific. But 1943 was the year of the war when all political leaders, sensing that the tide of war had turned

and Britain would be on the winning side, began to feel their way toward the post-war situation and to take stock of the trends of public opinion. Mr. Churchill made a famous speech that set the fashion in kite-flying. Mr. Morrison followed him with a speech which, in effect, was a reply to Churchill—a Coalition if the Labour Party thought so and no Coalition if it didn't.

Stafford Cripps followed these two leaders of parties and spoke as a "man without a party" and made it clear that he would join no party before the end of the war. Speaking to his constituents in Bristol he said:

"My views are still those for which you elected me, I belong to no party. It was on that basis I joined this Government and while I remain in the Government I shall join no party, old or new . . ."

Then he asked.

"How are we to pass from this National Government, this wartime coalition of parties, to a progressive active Government, which will be prepared to carry through a programme after the war that will not give us all we want, but that will give us a sufficiency to make certain that we are on the right road to progress and that will enable us to solve the problems with which we shall be faced? . . ."

He took note of what Churchill and Morrison had said, but he did not throw any light on his future course and was content to say:

"When the time comes I shall do what I have throughout sought to do and that is to take the action which I believe best serves the interests of my constituents and my country."

Many were the discussions he had with his friends of those Coalition days and with those who had been associated with him in the Popular Front campaign. Two things which had emerged more clearly than anything else were that to continue as a leader in politics he must have a party behind him and that there was no basis upon which he could found a new party. One close friend wrote to him about the time of his return from Moscow a letter of great frankness and courage, in which he said:

"The only mass political organisations at the moment are the Conservative and the Labour Parties, and I do not believe that there is the slightest hope of achieving anything in the near future except through one of these two organisations . . . the political line-up after the war

*must* be broadly the Conservative Party standing for reaction and the vested interests, and the progressives who want to see done the things that you and I want done, organised—where? If a new organisation is impossible, as I believe it is, they *can only* be organised in the Labour Party

If I am right about that, and if it is true that the Party is generally right-minded, you have an organisation in which you can do something after the war. If on the other hand you either antagonise the rank and file of the Labour Party or do not carry them with you, no amount of support from the intelligentsia or unattached people with the right ideas or disgruntled Tories will be of the slightest importance in getting big things done .”

His friend was brutally frank about his previous record in the Labour Party. He continued

“ . unfortunately you don't start with a clean slate! There is the history of your eight years association with the Labour Party. I've thought about it a lot and talked to a lot of people about it, and I think I know the attitude of the average Party member about it. It may be a misguided attitude, but whether it is misguided or not, it is a fact that has to be taken into consideration. The Socialist League, the United Front, the Popular Front may all have been dead right in theory—I think they were and so does a large section of the Party—but all of them, to put it bluntly, were flops, and resulted in your being turned out of the Party by a democratic vote (even though we know how democracy works inside the Party). The very deep and rather cow-like loyalty of the Party member expects a man either to submit to such a democratic vote or else washes its hands of him—e.g. Mosley and the 1931 people. I'm pretty certain that that is what it did to you in 1939, but now, thanks to your work in Russia and the patent incompetence of the present leaders, it is prepared to give you another chance. But that means that you have to be on your best behaviour!

“What the Party member objects to is your forming groups within the Party. Because you are the outstanding figure in these groups, they always come to be identified with your name . . . I'm convinced that another case of that will finish you with the rank and file of the Party and therefore with any kind of mass support in this country . . .”

There were those who sought to persuade him to form some new combination of the “disillusioned” of the old parties. He listened to them all but continued along his way, waiting until the war should end and clarify the position of the parties.

Meanwhile the war thundered along. After the last great



Nazi drive eastwards, culminating in the epoch-making defence of Stalingrad, the Red Army moved like an avalanche to the West until the Nazi Army was driven back upon the ruins of Berlin. The U-boat menace had been shattered by the British fleet and air forces. "D-Day" was followed by the Allied Second Front marching also towards Berlin. 1945 opened with the triumph of the Allied armies clearly in sight.

In the month of February, 1945, the Executive Council of the Labour Party, after some complicated negotiations concerning a local dispute in the constituency of East Bristol, formally readmitted Stafford Cripps to the Labour Party.

He was the last of the prominent United Front leaders to return, as Aneurin Bevan and George Strauss had returned in October, 1939.

Thus once more Stafford stepped into the forefront of the main stream of Labour politics with the tide flowing towards a General Election at an early date. The nearer the end of the war came, the less tenable became the Coalition of the parties. During 1943, there had been some discontent with the party truce. But there were no major developments until 1944, when the Prime Minister himself spoke of the "odour" of dissolution in the air.

The country was ready for an election. The Government had outlived its popularity. There had been a great "swing to the left" in public opinion. The influence of Russia and the many profound changes that had taken place in the course of the war, the success attending the state organisation of economy, had convinced vast numbers that what could be done by the state for the organisation of war could be done by it for the organisation of the peace.

The end of the Coalition was at hand. On May 6th, Stafford Cripps again entered the fray on the issue of a party election. Speaking at Widnes on that day, he said that there was indeed no democratic alternative to a party fight. He also put his finger on the fundamental issue of the election.

He said on this occasion:

"I am convinced that there is really only one fundamental issue, but that issue is absolutely basic to all our politics.

"The Conservatives profess their willingness to encourage private enterprise, which benefits and suits more influential supporters as the means to secure the best job in production. The only drawback from the point of view of the advocacy is that never yet in the history of the world



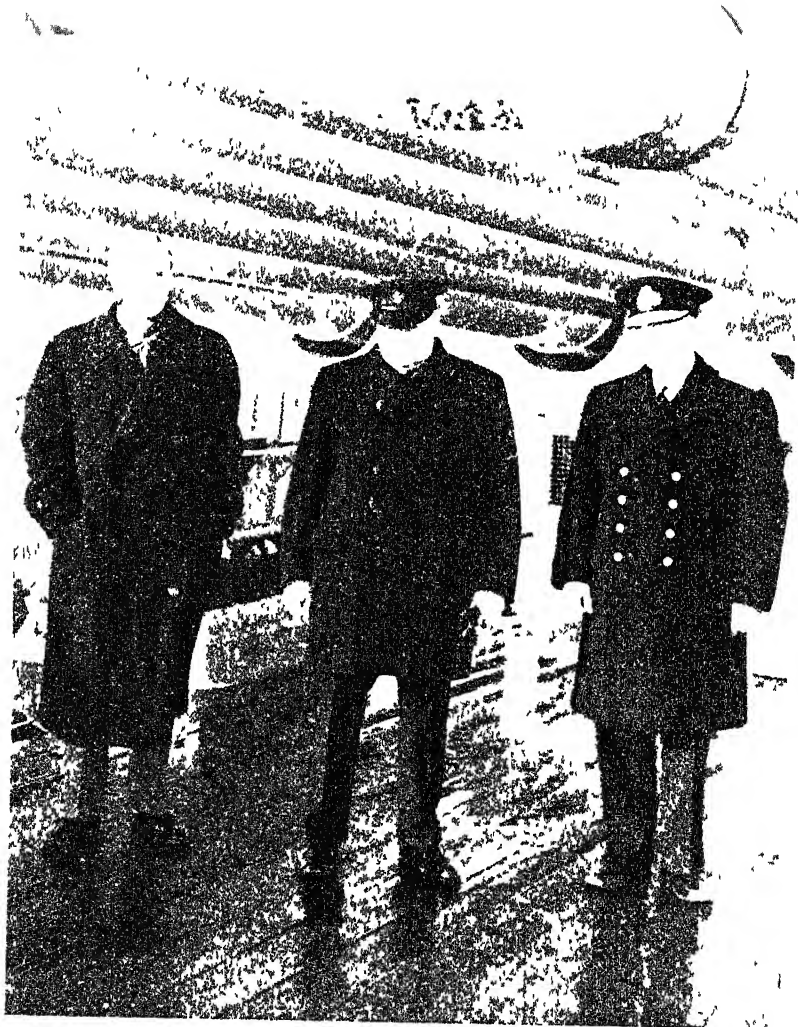
THE CHURCHMAN: AT A CHURCH ASSEMBLY, 1942, WITH  
THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, DR. CYRIL F. GARBETT, AND THE  
LATE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, DR. WILLIAM TEMPLE

*(Photo: Picture Post)*



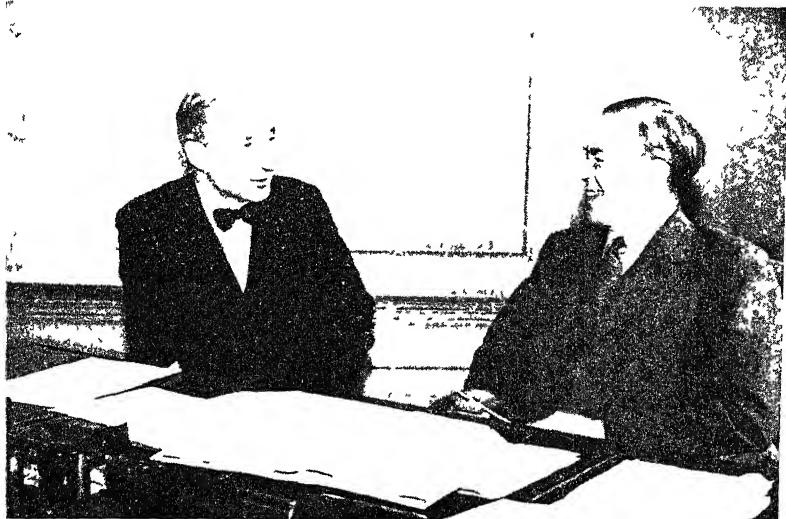
THE COUNTRYMAN: STAFFORD RELAXES AT HIS COUNTRY  
HOME, FRITH HILL

*(Photo: Felix H. Man)*



VISITING H M S "RELIANCE", 1942, WITH THE PRIME  
MINISTER, WINSTON CHURCHILL AND ADMIRAL SIR JOHN  
TOVEY

*(Photo Imperial War Museum)*



AS MINISTER OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION, 1942, WITH HIS CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE, SIR WILFRID FREEMAN

(Photo L N A )

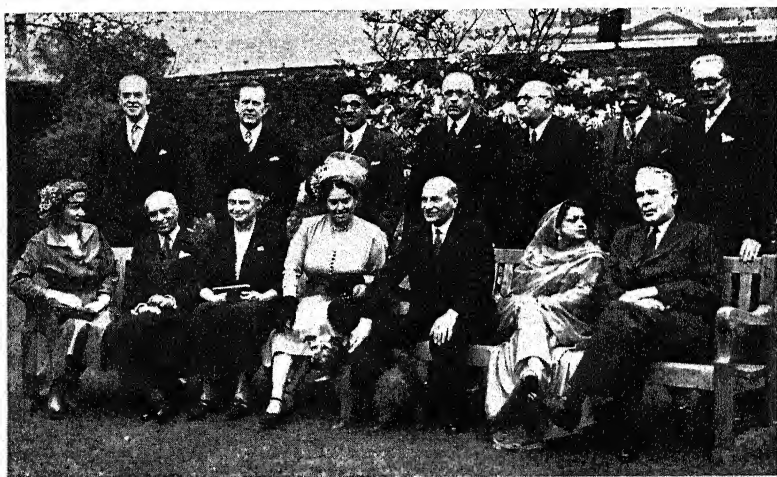


AS LABOUR CANDIDATE FOR BRISTOL EAST IN THE GENERAL  
ELECTION, 1945 WITH LADY CRIPPS AND (*on his right*) HERBERT E  
ROGERS, HIS POLITICAL AGENT THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER



WITH PRIME MINISTER ATTLEE, BEVIN, AND MEMBERS OF THE  
BURMESE DELEGATION AT 10, DOWNING STREET

*(Photo: Picture Post)*



COMMONWEALTH PREMIERS' CONFERENCE AT  
10, DOWNING STREET, 1949

*(Photo: Daily Herald)*

has an unplanned and uncontrolled private economy succeeded in getting rid of unemployment or avoiding vast wastage of materials and labour

"The Labour Party takes the diametrically opposite view

"We say that all industry and all great services like transport and coal and power supply must be so organised as to give to the people as a whole the maximum that is possible. In fact the production of the country must be considered as a great public service, as in fact it is, and that we must not only see to it that we get produced those things that we want. In other words the necessities for the country and the people must take priority over the luxuries and semi-luxuries

"In order to achieve that end we must be prepared to see whatever method of organising our industry proves to be best. We have no interest in preserving or destroying private enterprise except to create efficiency in our production "

The new theme of a "planned" mixture of State ownership and controlled capitalism emerges here completely.

Two weeks later he received a great and cordial welcome at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party held at Blackpool amidst all the excitement of a near-election atmosphere and under the chairmanship of Cripps' old colleague and supporter, Ellen Wilkinson. He made one short intervention in the conference debate on the statement of policy. "Let us face the Future". He was not conscious at the time of how great would be the responsibility that would fall on his shoulders for the implementing of this programme but those who heard him on this occasion commented on the difference of emphasis in this speech compared with his challenging speech after the fall of the Labour Government in 1931. Then he talked much about the breakdown of capitalism and how "Capitalism must go". Now his theme of "planned economy" is uppermost. After expressing his appreciation of the warm welcome given to him by the conference, he said

"We should not under-estimate the difficulties of a national plan for our industries. Those of us who have been concerned with the planning of war industries—in my particular department we have had fifteen thousand firms to control and to plan—realise that when we come to the broader national plan that will be required, with its degree of nationalisation and control in different industries, we shall be faced with a very difficult technical task, a task made the more difficult because no due preparations have been made for its accomplishment

"The second point I want to stress is the need there will be for ex-

pediting our Parliamentary arrangements. If you look at the column of legislation that will have to flow from this programme, even over a period of five years, you will realise that in a peace-time Parliament, with all the tricks of the Opposition that are open to those who wish to delay legislation, it is not going to be by any means an easy task to get the job done. Our possibility of seeing this programme through to the end will depend largely upon what we can show the people we can accomplish in the early months of our power. That is the time when we shall have the chance and we have got to see to it that machinery of Parliament and of Government is such that we can make an effective contribution to the carrying out of this programme in those early months."

In May, 1945, the war in Europe came to an end.

Fifteen days after the bugles had sounded "Cease Fire" in Europe, Mr. Churchill tendered his resignation. The Coalition Government was dissolved. Polling day was fixed for July 5th, 1945, and the results were to be declared on July 26th. Meanwhile a "Caretaker Government" carried on.

Stafford Cripps moved from his Government offices to an attic room in bomb-wrecked London, busied himself in election problems despite every inconvenience, and at once came to the front in the Labour Party's election campaign. He spent little time in East Bristol, his own constituency. There was really no need for him to do more than spend a few days there. It was a safe Labour seat and he was returned with 27,975 votes out of 38,048. His election address was of a more domestic type than those of the other Labour Ministers. In front there was a photograph of himself with his wife. He told the electors that it was with their backing that he went to Moscow in 1940 and subsequently joined the War Cabinet upon his return. It was with their good wishes that he went to India as representative of the British people in 1942. As all Europe had moved to the Left, the Labour Party would be best suited to keep friendship with the new Governments and would be a Government in broad sympathy with the views of the Russian people.

Speaking at a Labour meeting in Wembley on June 4th, he gave warning of a coming clash of interests between Great Britain and the Soviet Union should a Tory Government be returned. Of course he was speaking on the assumption that his Labour colleagues meant what they said when they assured the electorate that there would not be a "continuity of foreign policy".

He said:

"Any suspicion on either side, any lack of understanding, will tend to drive both Russia and our country to resort to private schemes of security which will bring us into an inevitable clash of interests

"At all costs we must avoid being drawn into the position of rival spheres of interest, one in the west and another in the east.

"But the cost is a genuine honest desire to understand and co-operate with the Soviet Union "

He was convinced that the question of Anglo-Soviet relations was the most important and critical in British foreign policy and that the Labour Party could handle the matter better than any other party in the country.

Ringling the changes on these themes, he toured the country for the Labour Party to help the candidates in other constituencies, instead of concentrating his energies on Bristol. He travelled three thousand miles in thirty days' up the west side of the country, through Coventry, Birmingham, Oldham, Darwin, Stockport, north to Carlisle, Glasgow, Dundee, east to Edinburgh, Newcastle, Wakefield, Halifax, Hull, Sheffield. He broke his trip to entrain for a B.B.C. broadcast in London. He then spent two days in Bristol, Stroud and Gloucester, and began a new tour through Bournemouth, Exeter, Plymouth, Bristol, Bath, Cardiff, during which time he gave as many as six talks a night. The speeches were never written in advance; Cripps carried a little set of notes, printed on card-paper. Often, his sole manuscript was the pasting of an opposition speech reported in the day's press. His only written speech was given in Edinburgh on the subject of India. A few days earlier, while in Dundee, he had learned of Nehru's release from prison in India and immediately wired Isobel's and his congratulations and best wishes.

In order to conserve his energy during this gruelling period, Cripps worked according to a plan. Every morning Stafford would meet his chauffeur-secretary-companion, Allan Jarvis, for an eight-thirty a.m. breakfast in the hotel where they had spent the night. They would wade through all the morning newspapers, following which Stafford would decide the hour of their leave-taking. He would then retire to the hotel's reading-room, where he would go through a fantastic amount of correspondence, writing scores of letters in his precise, clear handwriting. Then to the road. Sometimes Stafford drove, at other times Jarvis. If the latter drove, Stafford enjoyed brief cat-naps. When the travellers arrived in the city of their destination, they would deposit their bags at an hotel, enjoy a luxurious tea, and



spend a free hour, during which time Stafford would relax. With the day's travel behind him and speeches ahead, Stafford would reminisce about legal and political battles in which he had been a participant, in which the litigants were usually world-famed figures or organisations, high-lighting his narration with anecdotes and equally amusing word-portraits of the disputants.

Stafford and Jarvis finished their tour by spending three hectic campaigning days in East Bristol, which Stafford has represented in Parliament throughout his political life. There, as everywhere, his speeches were in the nature of lectures, that were both political and religious in tone and substance. Whilst they were on tour Isobel had been working in Stafford's constituency.

Broadcasting played an important part in the election and Stafford Cripps naturally was in the list of broadcasters. The two most famous broadcasts were of course the first two, given by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Attlee respectively. Churchill made every conceivable blunder, and the contrast the following night when Attlee spoke was absolutely overwhelming. The day of the results was quite fantastic too. For none expected them to reveal so complete a change-over in terms of party power. There were in the House of Commons 640 seats. Before the election there were 359 Conservative members. After the election there were 189. Before the election Labour had 164. After the election Labour had 393. Labour polled 11,992,292 votes and the Conservatives or Nationals polled 9,983,906.

Stafford Cripps, with a seventeen thousand nine hundred vote majority, addressed a great meeting of supporters in the Drill Hall, Bristol. By his side were his wife and three other Labour M.P.s for Bristol divisions. He was no longer a "man without a party"—but a leader of the Labour Party who was certain to be among the chosen members of the Labour Government now to be formed.

The next day the newspapers announced that the new President of the Board of Trade was the Right Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps, P.C., K.C., M.P.

## CHAPTER 19

### BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC CONTROLLER

STAFFORD CRIPPS' appointment as the new President of the Board of Trade was welcomed. It was announced among the first seven Ministerial appointments—the others being Sir William Jowitt as Lord Chancellor and Arthur Greenwood as Lord Privy Seal—both rewards of long service; Mr. Bevin, Foreign Secretary, Mr. Morrison, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, and Dr. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer. The other appointment was that of Mr. Atlee himself to the office of Minister of Defence, in addition to the Premiership.

"Sir Stafford Cripps is the best President of the Board of Trade in the upper ranks of the Labour Party, he combines Socialist orthodoxy with an understanding of how industry functions—a rare and happy combination," said the *Economist* of August 4th.

What the *Economist* understands by "Socialist orthodoxy" is not clear, but the praise from this quarter on August 4th may have been due to Cripps' election broadcast, in which he stressed the importance of efficiency, and particularly managerial efficiency, in industry. Within a few weeks he showed he was in earnest on this point. But before that he had to make an important broadcast to the United States on behalf of the Labour Government. This was on August 1st, only five days after the election results and the resignation of Prime Minister Churchill. Once more he made it clear that his Socialism and that of the Labour Government had a new emphasis, namely that of "planned economy" without emphasis on change of ownership. He said:

"Labour put forward a limited programme to be carried out in the next five years.

"We sought power to plan the orderly development of the country's resources, bringing some few of the more important industries and services under national ownership, while retaining a system of planned and controlled private enterprise for the rest.

"In this way the Labour Party believes it can make our democracy more effective and more all-embracing in its scope, and hopes to be able by these means to raise the general standard of living throughout the country "

But the Labour Government was not yet free to give undivided attention to the fulfilment of its election programme. Although the war in Europe was at an end, Japan had yet to be reduced to the point of "unconditional surrender". Three months from the day of victory in Europe the Red Army of the Soviet Union crashed into the Japanese armies in Manchuria

During the war British, American and Canadian scientists without intimating their activities to their Russian allies produced the atom bomb. Without warning to the world American airmen dropped atom bombs on Hiroshima and in August, 1945, the war with Japan came also to an end. From this date begins the work of the British Labour Government to implement its election programme.

The circumstances now facing it were extraordinary. Certainly none of those who formed the Government had ever dreamed that Labour would come to power under such circumstances

Britain had emerged from the war with her Empire disintegrating, her economy exhausted and completely dominated by America. The latter had forced her to sell £1,000,000,000 of her securities to pay ready cash for supplies at the beginning of the war. To carry on the war she had become a debtor to everyone of her Dominions and to India and by the end of the war her debit balance to the U.S.A. on Lend-Lease account was £4,200,000,000. Her internal debt had reached dimensions undreamed of in her history. She began the First World War with a National Debt of £800,000,000. She ended it with a National Debt of £8,000,000,000. She entered the Second World War with a National Debt of £8,000,000,000 and came out of it with a debt of £26,000,000,000 after the U.S.A. had wiped out her debt on Lend-Lease account. She had paid half the cost of the war by stepping up taxation, and half of it by borrowing. Britain began the war with 21,000,000 tons of merchant shipping which earned her £150,000,000 a year to set against her imports. Almost half of her merchant ships were sent to the bottom of the sea in the U-boat warfare. Her export trade had shrunk to approximately twenty-nine per cent of what it was in 1939. No country in the world is so dependent upon foreign

trade. Importing fifty per cent of her foodstuffs and raw material she needs a great export trade in order to pay for her imports. But the uneven development of the world's economy had left Britain in the parlous position that the country from which she secured the greatest proportion of her imports could not take payment for those goods by goods. Britain's main sources of supply were the United States and the countries dominated by U.S. economy. These however not only exported the goods which Britain needed but also the goods which Britain herself exported. Only a fraction of the goods Britain imported from America were paid for by exports from Britain. Hence Britain had to pay the balance either in dollars or gold. The economy of Europe was in ruins and every country outside Russia and the countries associated with her stood in the same relationship to American countries as Britain. All countries needed imports from America. None were in a position to pay cash for them, nor were they in a position to pay by the export of goods. In any case America was not in a position to accept such payments on the scale which would balance against the goods received.

At the time the war ended millions of British soldiers, sailors and airmen were spread across the earth, impatient to return home. The economy of the country was still geared to the demands of war-time and not of peace. The state machine for the control of the economy in war-time was in the hands of the Labour Government, with the heritage of a disintegrating Empire to deal with and the responsibilities thrust upon a victorious power to make the "peace" of the world. Such was the background of the general situation when the British Labour Government was formed in 1945 and Stafford Cripps became President of her Board of Trade.

It should be understood that he was not, by virtue of his post as President of the Board of Trade, in charge of the whole economy of the country. His Department had to deal only with a sector of the economy which was not state-owned, and with imports and exports. It was a big Department and important. It would have to fit in with the general plan which the Government would pursue under the higher direction of Mr. Herbert Morrison and Mr. Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The plan as a whole to which the Labour Government was committed would have to include the switch-over from war production to peace production.

The Government plan included the nationalisation of the Bank of England, the Coal industry, Railway and Road

Transport, Gas, Electricity and Steel industries, state direction of industry and economy in general by a licensing and permit system for the use of scarce raw materials, the continuance of the war-time technique of high taxation, borrowing and saving, the direction of both state and private capital investment; new raw material and trade developments within the British Empire; bulk purchase and bi-lateral trade agreements with foreign countries; re-distribution of labour forces to the export industries, and big capital development of British agriculture.

Having started off by assuring America that the Labour Government was not about to inaugurate Socialism in Britain, but were attempting nothing worse than to prove that the Labour Government could run state capitalism far better and more efficiently than the Conservatives, Stafford proceeded to pick up the threads of his Department, the Board of Trade, and to prove that he, at any rate, had on him the hallmark of efficiency. One of the defects of the British Parliamentary system as worked at present is the necessary combination by each responsible Minister of a vast amount of pure routine work with policy formulation. Cripps, therefore, had to get down at once to working out his policy for the half-and-half control of industry while performing the day-to-day detailed work. For example, on the first day Cripps answered questions on the shortages of boots, shoes, clothing, the delay in the delivery of textile machinery, how many square feet of industrial floor space was still under requisition by Government Departments, the surrender of clothing coupons for surgical belts, applications by ex-service-men in Cardiff for licences to set up in business on their own, the publication of an international trade directory, requirements of Brazil for agricultural machinery, the rehabilitation of British trade in Yugoslavia and the Baltic countries, clearance regulations in Peru and Ecuador, the supply of bedding for students, the monthly production of cotton goods, and work in ordnance factories.

Of the big jobs waiting to be tackled, the first was cotton. An efficient and highly-productive cotton industry was vital both for the export drive and for the demands of home consumers. More fundamentally, it was to provide a test case in the application of efficiency techniques to industry remaining in private hands.

Cripps began with a nation-wide warning that clothes were going to remain in short supply. Speaking to an audience of employers and operatives in Oldham, a Lancashire cotton town,

on August 11th, he said a point had been reached in the supply of cotton cloth where it was doubtful whether the ration, at its present rate, could be continued

That was a pretty grim beginning for the general public and a good many people began to hold Cripps responsible for the austerity, instead of the condition of British economy. But he did not let matters rest there. Turning to the cotton industry itself, he spoke in the following terms:

"It is not part of the present Government's policy to nationalise the cotton industry provided that the industry, upon which more than two million of our people depend directly or indirectly for their living, carries through with expedition the measures necessary for its re-organisation."

To find the measures necessary for the "reorganisation" of the industry, he announced that a "working party" was to be appointed, consisting of four representatives of the employers, four of the Trade Unions, and four independent members and a chairman appointed by the Board of Trade. This group, or "party", was to review all the many existing plans for the industry and produce the final plan by Christmas. Other such groups were to be set up for other industries; all of them were to be tripartite; in each case the employers' and the workers' representatives were to be selected from panels nominated by the associations of the employers and of the unions; and in each case the working group was to be urged to meet continuously and to report promptly.

This plan for the re-organising of industries was Stafford Cripps' distinct contribution to industrial administration. It was a bold experiment which went much further than the Trade Union movement had hitherto gone in its demands for the application of the principle of "sharing in the control of industry". It meant the assumption by Trade Unions of a share in general responsibility for the organisation of industry at a higher level than the Joint Production Committees of war-time. After years of discussion in the Trade Union movement the leaders had rejected the principle of Trade Union representation on the Boards of Control of Socialised industries. They were quite prepared for trade unionists to be members of these Boards of Control but not as representatives of the unions. The unions were not prepared to take any responsibility for the running of industry.

When reports of the "working parties" had been received and

studied by the Department they would have to lay down the minimum requirements to be placed upon the industry in the national interest. Then it would be for the partnership to see that those requirements were carried into effect

He said.

"This was only a general picture of the way in which the Board of Trade proposed to proceed. A very great and important part would have to be played by the trade unionists, and so far as the trade union representatives are concerned the whole reputation of the trade union movement will be at stake as well as our own industrial future. It was a time for concentrated team work. There was no short cut—hard work and hard work alone could win us the prize of success and with that success continued power to progress to further heights."

There was no aspect of production to which he did not give attention.

He spoke on the need for good designing in industry. He said at a meeting of the Council of Industrial Design:

"Design is a factor of crucial importance to British industry to-day, whether we think of what is due from our own producers to our own people, or of how best to meet the competition we shall have to meet in foreign markets. At home, our common objective is a higher standard of living. And we must not think of that desirable aim merely in quantitative terms, regardless of its character, that is regardless of the quality of what our income can buy. You can have squalor and ugliness even amid riches."

He advised exporters that at the existing stage of recovery there was no question of canalising exports to particular markets:

"our needs for overseas currencies are so general that the complications of directional control are not worth while. . ."

Suddenly, however, Stafford was called upon to leave his department in the hands of a deputy for some months. The British Labour Government had on its hands the problem of the future of India which the Coalition Government had been unable to determine.

The failure of the Cripps Mission of 1942 had meant a reversal to the pre-mission situation. Many leaders, including Nehru and Gandhi, had been sent to prison. But when the war ended they were released. When Nehru was released Stafford Cripps and his wife, then in the midst of General Election campaigning, sent him their greetings. Nehru replied to him from

"Anand Bhawan,  
 "Allahabad,  
 "9 9.45.

DEAR STAFFORD,

"It was good of you and your wife to send me a message of greeting on my discharge from prison. I appreciated it very much. I am ashamed that I should have delayed in thanking you for it. I was overwhelmed with messages from friends and at the same time had no rest anywhere. Except for a day or two at home I have had to be on the move and I have only now come back for a few days stay at home. After a long period in prison, both the body and the mind require adjustment to the new environment, especially the mind. So, as soon as I could manage it I fled to the mountains in Kashmir and lived or rather dwelt for many days far from newspaper and post telegraph offices. I feel better for the change. But so much adjustment and adaptation are necessary. I suppose that will happen gradually. The difficulty is that one does not get much chance of doing so in a rapidly changing world, with new problems, or old problems in new shape, cropping up from day to day.

"I hope both of you are well

"Yours very sincerely,  
 "JAWAHARLAL NEHRU."

Yes, that was it. "Old problems in new shape" were thrusting themselves forward. Half the human race dwelling in the lands of the East, all the peoples of the pre-war colonial and semi-colonial lands of the Empires with their metropolitan power centred in the west, were giving notice to the western powers "to get out". What the First World War began, the Second World War was driving to its completion. Released from the threat of a Japanese invasion, the Indian peoples were again able to give undivided attention to their claim for freedom. The western powers had talked freedom, now let Britain put to the proof their declarations on freedom and democracy.

Fortunately for India, and for England, the impact of the war on Britain had so changed the minds of the people that they had elected a Labour Government committed to give India her freedom at the earliest possible date. Above all, the Labour Government didn't want an Indian revolutionary upheaval on its hands. It had appointed Lord Pethick-Lawrence to the India Office and instructed the Viceroy of India to begin new negotiations with the Indian leaders with a view to renewing the course indicated in the proposals advanced by the Cripps Mission of 1942. Convinced that time was short in which a



peaceful solution of the situation was possible, the Labour Government decided to send three Cabinet Ministers, Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Mr. Alexander, the first Lord of the Admiralty, and Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, on a further Mission to see if it were possible to do what the Cripps Mission of 1942 had failed to do. Lord Pethick-Lawrence was an old man, a lawyer, a scholar, political leader, ex-Liberal become Fabian idealist, and an able negotiator. Alexander was a Co-operative Party leader, an elderly Christian Socialist who presided over the Admiralty, an orator of Churchillian style although not entirely Churchillian content. The real force within the Mission would once more be Stafford Cripps and if he could not succeed it was certain the others would also fail.

Mr. Attlee made the "Independence" question clearer than it had ever been made by any British Prime Minister. He said:

"India herself must choose what will be her future constitution, what will be her position in the world. I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth. But if she does so elect, it must be by her own free will. If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so. It will be for us to help to make the transition as smooth and as easy as possible."

Nevertheless even that declaration was unable at once to wipe out the deep century-old suspicion that Britain was up to her tricks again and finding a new way of keeping her grip on India under the banner of "freedom". After all, it was difficult for Nehru and Gandhi and a host of others to forget that the same people who were now talking so pleasantly had been members of Governments who had forced them to spend a quarter of their lives in prison. Nor was the record of the previous Labour Government one to inspire a great deal of confidence. Mr. Attlee and Stafford Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and Alexander were members of it and had filled the gaols of India to overflowing and were responsible for thousands of Indians being killed, in short, had governed exactly as a Tory Government had done. The only difference the Indians had been able to discern was that the Labour Government was more self-righteous about its deeds of repression and its members wore choir-boy's surplices to hide their imperialist souls. And as Nehru put it:

"They forget that to-day they are addressing a sensitive, proud and virile people who will not put up with any patronage or anything smacking of superiority."

So the Labour Cabinet Mission set forth to give back to the Indians the "brightest gem in the British Crown". Stafford and his companions flew all the way, over the fields and mountains and rivers of France, over the Mediterranean, and down the leg of Italy to Tunis; over Malta and beyond Crete to Cyprus and away to Baghdad, arriving at New Delhi airfield on Sunday, March 24th, 1946. They were met by the Viceroy, Field-Marshal Viscount Wavell, a great soldier and a liberal-minded politician, representatives of the Government of India, the Service Commanders, and about a hundred correspondents from newspapers of all shades of opinion. Cripps was at once surrounded by the press men but resolutely refused to talk. "I am not going to say anything to the press," he is reported to have said, "only that we had a very good trip and I shall meet you all to-morrow."

"You are looking fatter than you were last time," a voice called from the press-men.

"That's cauliflowers and carrots," replied Cripps, and there was a round of delighted laughter.

Characteristically, Stafford Cripps had added to the party certain advisers of his own choosing, from outside the official circles of the India Office. Only one of these, Major Billy Short, was knowledgeable about India, through having lived and worked there for many years. Woodrow Wyatt was a young Labour Member of Parliament. George Blaker was Stafford's private secretary. One of the functions of this little group was to assist in the realm of personal relations. Stafford wished to feel in his own personal way, so far as he could, the pulse of Indian affairs, and the thoughts and emotions of the people of India, both through the filter of official channels and outside it. In this way he augmented his close personal contacts with Indian leaders.

This method of keeping in touch was powerfully reinforced during June, when Isobel, whose flight to India had been made necessary by Stafford's illness, began to make her own contacts and friendships, especially among Indian women. But through all the day-to-day changes, Stafford Cripps kept always in mind a goal that lay beyond the immediate future. He thought forward to the possibility of a true friendship between India and Great Britain, which would endure no matter what formal links might be broken in the grinding processes of history yet to be revealed.

The conditions and atmosphere favoured extremism. Nationalist election propaganda had left the country simmering.

The discipline of the Services was quite unreliable and the authority of the Government at a low ebb. Mr. Patel, on behalf of Congress, demanded the immediate transfer of power. Congress, he said, would not accept Mr. Jinnah's solution of Pakistan. Mr. Jinnah, however, speaking almost at the same time, expressed the determination of the Moslems to achieve Pakistan "by negotiation if possible, by bloodshed if necessary".

In this situation the Mission began the same kind of procedure as on the occasion of Stafford's previous visit in 1942. First, meetings with the Viceroy's Council, and then a whole series of interviews, talks with Gandhi, talks with Nehru, talks with Azad, talks with Jinnah, Provincial Ministers, ex-Ministers, leaders of organisations of all kinds, leaders of the "untouchables", the Trade Unions, the Parties, the Congress Committee, representatives of the Chamber of Princes, press conferences, and so on.

After three or four weeks intensive discussions with all these various elements within the Indian "situation", the Mission decided to have a rest for a few days and on April 11th, 1946, issued a statement as to their position. It said:

"The Cabinet Mission came out with the view that a speedy settlement of the outstanding questions was essential. They have, since their arrival, heard the opinions of the most important political elements in India. . .

" . . . The Mission are confident that at this great moment in the history of India it will be possible, with mutual goodwill, to reach that decision which the people of India so anxiously await and which will be welcomed throughout the world

" . . . When the Mission return they hope to find sufficient elements of agreement on which a settlement will be based."

The next important stage was the publication of the Mission's plan on May 16th, 1946, and announced by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, in the House of Commons on the same day. The best summary comes from the *News Chronicle* of May 17th:

"The new plan for India consists of three main parts. One lays down the broad lines on which a future constitution should be based

"The second lays down the procedure for electing an Indian, Constituent Assembly to meet as soon as possible in New Delhi and draft a constitution.

"The third states that the Viceroy will proceed immediately with the formation of an interim Government to rule India while the new constitution is being drawn up.

"The new India can be completely independent or can choose to be a member of the British Commonwealth. It should be formed on these lines:

"1 There should be a Union of India, embracing both British and the native States which would deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications and have powers to raise money for these purposes

"2 The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature constituted from British Indian and States representatives. But—and this is the most important clause of all—any question raising a major communal issue in the legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting

"This clause, which bears all the stamp of Sir Stafford Cripps' mind, is the Mission's plan for settling disputes between Hindus and Moslems. Pakistan they have ruled out as impracticable. So that anything affecting Hindus or Moslems would have to be approved by a majority of both Hindus and Moslems, as well as a majority of all the members

"3 All subjects other than Union subjects and all residuary powers should be in the hands of the provinces

"4. The States will retain all subjects and powers other than those ceded by the Union. In short it will be a Federal State, like the United States, with the individual Indian States, such as Madras or the Central Provinces, having all powers except those specifically handed over to the Central Government

"5 The Individual States would, however, be free to form groups among themselves, with executives and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common. This amounts to there being other small sub-Federations, for specific purposes, within the Main Union of India

"6 The constitution of the Union and of the groups should contain a provision whereby any province could by a majority vote of its legislative assembly call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals afterwards

'This Union constitution is to be worked out by Indians themselves—if they are willing. This is to be done by a new body, a constituent assembly

"Members of this would be elected by the present Hindu, Moslem or Sikh M.P.s of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies. They would have, in the Constituent Assembly, seats in proportion to their populations

"These seats are to be divided up between the three main communities—Sikh, Moslem and General—and elected by their respective M.P.s. The 'General' community would include Hindu Untouchables, and all other groups than Sikhs or Moslems. This, it is estimated, would give a total of 385 members, of which 93 would come from Indian native States and 292 from British India

"The native States would select their own representatives 78 of these would represent Moslems

"Pakistan is, in the Mission's view, impracticable. Such a Pakistan would comprise two main areas, one in the north-west and one in the north-east. Yet the north-west areas would have a non-Moslem minority of 37.93 per cent and the north-east a non-Moslem minority of 48.31 per cent.

"New minority problems would therefore be created. The individual Provinces could not be sub-divided to cut out these inner minorities. But short of Pakistan, very full recognition is made of Moslem claims. The cultural, religious, economic and other interests of non-Hindu communities are fully protected."

In the evening of the day of publication of this document, Lord Pethick-Lawrence spoke on the wireless, and then Cripps and Alexander held a press conference. Cripps explained the document.

Lord Pethick-Lawrence made it clear that the British had *no intention of transferring their responsibilities for the Government of India until the new constitution had been formed.*

That began the second round of discussions and conferences. The statement was well received by some, cautiously by others, and there was no out-and-out rejection. In Britain the reception was varied. Mr. Churchill regarded it as an able but "melancholy" document.

He said:

"There remains the discharge of our obligations to the Indian Minorities and to the Indian States. We must study the document with prolonged and searching attention in order to see that these duties have been faithfully safeguarded. It would seem at first sight that attention should be particularly directed to the position of the Moslem community of nearly eighty million, who are the most warlike and formidable of all the races and creeds in the Indian sub-continent and whose interests and culture are a matter of great consequence to India as a whole, and vital to the peace of India. Secondly, we must examine the provisions made for the depressed classes, or untouchables, who number nearly sixty millions, and for whose status and future repeated assurances have been given and pledges made by many British Governments, in ancient and more recent times.

"Finally, there are the relations which the Indian States, which comprise a quarter of the population and a third of the territory of the Indian sub-continent, are to have to the Crown and the new Government. . ."

Suddenly Stafford Cripps had to be taken to hospital suffering from overstrain due to overwork and the heat of Delhi. He was away from the Mission for ten days.

While the members of the Cabinet Mission and the various Indian leaders moved temporarily to mountainous Simla, to escape the oppressive heat of Delhi, an occasion for poetic reflection was offered to Cripps, who wrote,

### SIMLA

“Rimming the distant circle of the pale blue sky  
In never-changing whiteness stand the Himalayan heights  
The lesser hills fill the foreground, range on range,  
Folding their tree-clad slopes into the deep valleys  
High above weaving in endless circles soar the kite,  
In the cool and silent evening I gaze as, the Psalmist's words,  
Lingering in my memory, rise to my lips —  
'I will turn mine eyes unto the Hills  
From whence cometh my strength'.

The snow-capped mountains stand unchangeable  
Rooted in timeless grandeur, their unsullied peaks  
Flood the frail human mind with majesty eternal,  
Symbol of that strength which comes from God alone,  
That purity of purpose, divine and everlasting patience  
And endless courage which are the very hall-mark of His love  
Surrounding all who seek his help and guidance  
So it was the Psalmist saw those other hills  
To which he turned his eyes and from them drew  
His courage and his strength.”

How relevant these words to Cripps' own hours of travail!

On June 3rd, however, Stafford was able to resume his part in the Mission's work, and after he and the Viceroy had had conferences with Jinnah on June 6th, the Moslem League Council gave a positive lead to the country by unanimously passing a resolution agreeing to work the Cabinet Mission's plan for the making of the future constitution and for an interim Government. Stafford Cripps later paid tribute to Mr. Jinnah, when he said in the House of Commons, on July 18th.

“It must have required no little courage and determination on Mr Jinnah's part, in the light of the strong views held and very forcibly expressed by his followers, to support and carry this Resolution through the Moslem League.”

At the same time, the Moslem League made it clear that it abated not one jot of its demand for the future division of India into two sovereign states, Pakistan and Hindustan—and it contradicted statements contained in the preamble to the Mission's proposals regarding the impracticability of Pakistan. The Congress was also prepared to accept the long-term plan as a basis from which the Constituent Assembly could be formed and a constitution agreed upon. Hopes were now definitely rising for a complete agreement, but the rock upon which this optimism foundered was the composition of the interim Government.

On June 14th, Congress definitely rejected the Mission's plan for an interim Government. So the Viceroy stepped into the forefront again with another effort. He proposed that the basis of representation should provide for Congress Party 5, Moslem League 5, Depressed Classes (Congress wing) 1, Sikh 1, Parsee 1, Christian 1. But agreement was not to be had that way either. Gandhi insisted, rightly, that Congress was a nationalist and not a communal organisation and, therefore, entitled to nominate a nationalist non-League Moslem to the Viceroy's proposed Cabinet. That put the "cat amongst the pigeons". Jinnah would not accept a Moslem in the Cabinet who was not a member of the Moslem League.

On June 26th, the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy issued a statement. It welcomed the acceptance of their long-term plan, and went on:

"The Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy regret that it has not so far proved possible to form an interim coalition Government, but they are determined that the effort should be renewed in accordance with the terms of their statement of June 16th."

"... As the Government of India must be carried on until a new interim Government can be formed, it is the intention of the Viceroy to set up a temporary caretaker Government of officials."

"It is not possible for the Cabinet Mission to remain longer in India, as they must return to report to the British Cabinet and Parliament and also resume their work, from which they have been absent for over three months. They therefore propose to leave India on Saturday next, June 29th. In leaving India, the members of the Cabinet Mission express their cordial thanks for all the courtesy and consideration which they have received as guests in the country, and they most sincerely trust that the steps which have been initiated will lead to the speedy realisation of the hopes and wishes of the Indian people."

So near and yet so far. The British were finding it very difficult to get out of the tangle of communalism which they had fostered so long. Their concessions to the Moslem League had gone too far, and thrust them into challenging the Congress Party's integrity as a national organisation, by playing straight into the hands of Jinnah on the communal issue, although they knew that the Congress Party represented twice the population represented by the Moslem League. " 5

Meanwhile, Stafford Cripps and his two Minister colleagues, Lord Pethick-Lawrence and Mr Alexander, left India on Saturday, June 29th

By July 17th, the final returns of the Indian elections to the Constituent Assembly were to hand, showing the Congress Party had won 201 seats out of 210 seats allotted to the general constituencies. The Assembly would be composed of 385 members. Of the seventy-eight allotted to the Moslems the Moslem League won seventy-three. The four Sikh seats remained unfilled. The 201 Congress members included twenty-five representatives of the Depressed Classes, seven Christians, three Anglo-Indians and twelve women.

The quarrel between the Congress and the Moslem League became fiercer and communal disturbances began on a large scale. On August 12th, the Viceroy turned to the Congress Party and invited Nehru to make proposals for the immediate formation of an interim Government, which he proceeded to do. Nehru formed a Government which the Viceroy, with Nehru's agreement, offered to re-form at once if the Moslem League would agree to come in. He invited Jinnah to nominate five names for a Government of fifteen. Jinnah refused. He declared the Viceroy had betrayed the Moslems, gone back on previous pledges and struck a severe blow at the Moslem League and Moslem India. Violence spread. Nehru continued to hope for the co-operation of the Moslem League. On October 15th, the Moslem League at last agreed to enter the interim Government. Still the violence grew. It was reported on October 18th that nearly six thousand people had been killed and fifteen thousand injured, mainly in Bengal. Although the Moslems had entered the Government there was no real co-operation between the members, and the Moslems refused now to enter the Assembly, having withdrawn their previous endorsement of the long-term programme. In December, the Indian leaders, Nehru and Jinnah, came to London for discussions with the British Government concerning procedure in the Constituent Assembly, but no



really satisfactory agreement was arrived at. On February 20th, 1947, the British Prime Minister, Attlee, announced in Parliament that the Government intended to transfer power into "responsible Indian hands" not later than June, 1948. This represented an abandonment of the position taken up by the Cabinet Mission document, which laid it down that the British Government would hand over power to the Indians only when the Constituent Assembly had produced an agreed constitution. Now it fixed a date to hand power to an "interim Government" and leave the Indians with complete responsibility for the settling of their differences by agreement or by fighting them out to a finish, precisely what Gandhi had asked for always. It was hoped that the fixing of the date for the surrender of power would drive the Congress Party and the Moslem League to find a basis of agreement.

At the same time, Mr. Attlee announced that Lord Wavell, who had been appointed Viceroy in 1943, would be recalled and:

"The King has approved his successor Viscount Mountbatten, who will be entrusted with the task of transferring to Indian hands the responsibility for the Government of British India in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India."

Pandit Nehru described the British decision as a "wise and courageous one". Mr. Jinnah said: "The Moslem League will not yield an inch in its demand for Pakistan." Disturbances continued. The new Viceroy began the familiar job of interviewing the leaders.

At first Mountbatten urged the political leaders to accept unreservedly the Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16th, 1946. He considered that the plan provided the best arrangement that could be devised to meet the interests of all the communities of India. But he made no progress along that line and later suggested, and the British Government approved the suggestion, that Britain should transfer power at once to one or two Governments of British India each having Dominion Status as soon as the necessary arrangements could be made. This was, of course, a clear concession to the Moslems. So there were to be two Dominions, one in the hands of the Indian Congress, the other in the hands of the Moslem League, and the future of the hundreds of feudal princely States unsettled.

Pandit Nehru said:

"It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course "

He meant that there was no other reasonable course the Congress could now take, but his heart was sad because he knew India was not being united as a nation in the moment that it became independent but power was being handed over to two Governments organised as communal powers with a conglomeration of feudal states yet to be sorted out. Now the Government altered the date of withdrawal.

On July 10th, 1947, Mr Attlee moved the second reading of the Indian Independence Bill in Parliament. On August 14th, at a midnight "Independence meeting" in Delhi, Pandit Nehru, friend of Stafford Cripps, said India would.

"wake up to life and freedom We end to-day a period of ill fortune, and India discovers herself again "

So one more of the great aims which Stafford Cripps had set before him, and to which he had given unremitting energy and service, at last was realised. His was not the hand that finally sealed the pact nor was it completed as he would have had it. But the goal of Indian independence was the same and no man could deny that of all Englishmen who had played a leading part in the act of liberation, none had rendered a greater service than he. A new chapter of Indian history had begun to be written by the Indians alone.

Meanwhile, Stafford Cripps resumed his labours in the post-war economic battle of Britain. With that easy facility which had marked his career as lawyer and politician he returned to his job at the head of the Board of Trade and plunged into his labours as if there had been no gap of months of concentration on an entirely different kind of job, some six thousand miles away. Hardly had he resumed his labours when he again stepped into the spotlight of publicity with a speech at Bristol on October 27th, 1946, which upset Trade Union leaders of the Left and the Right and many others besides them. His speech was on industry and he happened to say:

"From my experience there is not as yet a very large number of workers in Britain capable of taking over large enterprises

"I have on many occasions tried to get representatives of the workers on all sorts of bodies and working parties. It has always been extremely difficult to get enough people qualified to do that sort of job.

"Until there has been more experience by the workers of the

managerial side of industry, I think it would be impossible to have worker-controlled industry in Britain, even if it were on the whole desirable "

Of course, every newspaper unsympathetic to Cripps and the Labour Government made the fullest use of this statement. The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Express*, the *Financial Times* and the *News Chronicle* gave it prominence.

"The astonishing declaration that few workers are capable of managing large-scale enterprises was made last night by Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, in Bristol

"Sir Stafford not only declared that 'worker-controlled industry' was almost impossible, but used a phrase clearly implying his doubt as to the desirability of the workers controlling industry at all "

It did not end there. On January 16th, 1947, a meeting of the Bristol Trades Council refused to accept a letter from him in which he dealt in further detail with the question of "workers' control" of industry.

The letter read.

"The Labour Party's policy is not syndicalist. It does not believe in 'workers' control' as such. It is a fact that there are not enough trade unionists with experience of managerial functions, and I have pressed the trade unions to increase the educational facilities for their members on these problems

"I know from my experience in getting—out of a whole industry—enough trade unionists to man a single Working Party, how difficult it is and how difficult the T.U.C. and the Unions find it to get enough suitable men. Those who are qualified are already, most of them, hopelessly overworked on their own trade union affairs and just cannot be spared.

"Surely every member of the A.E.U. [Amalgamated Engineering Union] has to serve a proper apprenticeship before he is appointed to do his job; so must a person who is to take over management functions be properly qualified "

The Trades Council was annoyed. A member named Miss Jessie Stevens stole the headlines. She said:

"The majority of us in this room have had experience of administrative work and in a managerial capacity. It is an absolute insult to the workers of the country that a philosophic and theoretical Socialist such as Stafford Cripps should make such a statement. It implies that the workers are so silly and incompetent that they would fall down on the job."

It was quite clear that class emotions had been stirred. Nevertheless into the lions' den went Stafford to fight the matter out. In other words, the Bristol Trades Council organised a conference of five hundred delegates from Trade Unions, Divisional Labour Parties and Co-operative Guilds to discuss the matter with him. On this occasion, Cripps said:

"It so happens, by the unhappy accident of history, that there are very few trade unionists who have hitherto had the opportunity to get the training necessary for management. It is quite wrong to imagine that, because a person is an intelligent worker or foreman, therefore he can, without training, become a good manager. There are in fact, at present, very few workers who could take on the job of management, not because they are workers, but because they have not had the opportunity of training for the job

"What I have stressed is the need to associate the workers with managerial functions to give them the chance which they have hitherto been denied. That is why I have advocated the extension of joint production councils and works councils, in which managerial functions can be fully discussed. That is why, too, I insisted upon the association of workers in working parties and in every other activity for which my department is responsible."

Probably there is no question upon which there is greater confusion in the Trade Union and Labour Movement generally than that which had now brought Stafford under fire from the trade unionists.

"Joint consultation" however is not the issue nor does the readiness and ability of the workers to control industry turn upon the number of ready-made managers the Trade Unions can produce for the "working parties". The facts of the matter are simple and clear. Managerial functions have been identified with ownership from the dawn of industry until now. The whole hierarchy of the functionaries of management, from the managing director down to the charge hand, have been issuing orders to the wage workers below them. Management is a science and an art which cannot be learned without *responsibility*, for management is the art of organising responsibility and the functioning of every element within industry. If the mechanism of the Joint Production Committees and "working parties" is to be nothing more than a medium of consultation it will make little difference in the position of the workers or in the number who qualify for managerial posts. To become means of workers' participation in

management they have to *share responsibility with the management* for the making of plans and their fulfilment. It is a two-way process which under Labour's over-all control of the production mechanism requires managerial staffs to get rid of their "governing class" psychology and make the discovery that sharing *responsibility* with the "men on the job" will make management easier, more efficient and more productive. It requires of the workers who have not had managerial responsibility to share it through their *organisations at all levels of industry*. Then "training managers" will be part of the daily experience of industry and not something to be learned in "continuation classes" of the Trade Unions or local authorities.

It was in this period that Britain was hit by the hardest winter she had experienced for nearly a century. Deep snow, hard frosts, terrific blizzards held sway for months and strained the economic apparatus of the country severely. The period of icy blizzards was followed by great floods, heavy rains, bursting banks of rivers. The Opposition to the Labour Government gleefully rubbed their hands and laid the slowing-up of production and the dislocations at the door of the Ministers and their "pet schemes". The newspapers capitalised the crisis, talked of the Government "falling" and the need for a Coalition. But the Government did not fall. Nevertheless, important changes did take place. Herbert Morrison, the Minister in charge of Economy and Planning, fell ill and Stafford Cripps was called upon to deputise for him in these matters. Although he had not yet become the key man of the controlling apparatus of the whole economy of the country he was now acting far beyond the range of the Board of Trade. He still needed to get his grip upon the financial apparatus to function freely as the complete economic co-ordinator of the Government and "planner-in-chief". But financial control was in the hands of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Theoretically the economic policy and the financial policy should be integrated or geared to each other and under a single control. Actually, however, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had control of the financial policy of the country, and until the institutions of economic planning and co-operation built up by Morrison merged with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's apparatus of the Treasury the two Departments could easily get at cross-purposes, and in practice it meant that Stafford Cripps as President of the Board of Trade and Deputy Minister of Economy was not the highest authority with regard to economic policy. Extraordinary circumstances were soon to

make it possible to solve that problem. The need for it was becoming increasingly apparent day by day, as the international financial relationships made their crisis impact upon the economic recovery programme which Cripps was pursuing through the institutions in his control

He was convinced that he had got the measure of Britain's economic problem. His great anxiety was not the mechanism or the human material of British industry, difficult as it may prove to be to reorganise it and re inspire it. His greatest anxiety was the international economic situation, over which he could exercise no control and from which he could not insulate Great Britain. The crux of the immediate situation can be stated very simply. Lend-Lease, upon which Britain had so much depended during the war, ended in August 1945. At that time, Britain was getting twenty-five per cent of her imports from America and twenty per cent from Canada. But she was selling less than five per cent of her exports to America and less even than that to Canada. How then to pay for her imports? The total gold and dollar resources would not go very far. The only possibility was to ask for loans from these two countries. Agreements were made in the summer of 1946 with Canada for a loan of £273,000,000 and with the United States for a loan of £938,000,000. It was hoped that these would almost cover the estimated gap between the cost of imports and the proceeds of exports in the period 1946-48. But the plain fact is that instead of bridging the uncomfortable gap, the loans were spent at such a rate that very little was left at the end of a year. In a little over twelve months the total spent was £986,000,000.

The net result of developments from the summer of 1946 to that of 1947, was that the over-all adverse balance, which was £400,000,000 in 1946, had risen to over £350,000,000 in the first half of 1947. The dollar deficit, which was below £350,000,000 in 1946, had increased to £405,000,000 or at an annual rate of £810,000,000 in the first half of 1947. Things were moving to a climax. Monthly spendings according to Mr. Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on August 7th, were, in millions of dollars, 137 in January, 224 in February, 323 in March, 307 in April, 334 in May, 308 in June, and 538 in July. On August 20th, Mr. Dalton had to announce the suspension of convertibility of the pound and Mr. Morrison, who was now in charge of the economic programme again, and Stafford Cripps back at the Board of Trade had to face the House of Commons with a programme of cuts in imports and a hint of a new loan.

Stafford Cripps summed up the position at this point. He said

“The time for the realisation of our aims and hopes has been set back by the inescapable economic facts of world development . . . the battle of the balance of payments is as tough a proposition as this country has ever had to face . . . our failure or success will depend in the last resort on the spirit of the people. The quality of the effort that is needed is not such that it can be evoked by material considerations or by the intensification of self-interest or competitive self-seeking. There must be no sense of injustice and no favouritism or privilege except as the reward for an honest contribution to the needs of the people ”

In September, what became known as the Cripps Plan was launched. He explained that its object was to raise exports to 140 per cent of the 1938 level, as soon as possible, and certainly by not later than July, 1948. This involved raising monthly exports by £31,000,000, although this amount would only pay for imports at the current level. Any improvements in the standard of living could only come from a further increase in exports beyond 140 per cent to the second target of 160 per cent set for the end of 1948. Others were a new coal target, a stepping-up of steel production, increase in the amount of home-produced food, tighter control over both public and private capital investment, and the introduction of a new “Control of Engagement Order” to assist in guiding those unemployed or becoming so into essential industries and services.

For some time Stafford Cripps had held public attention with a campaign for his plan and there was no doubt about the fact that he was more and more looked upon as the key man of the Government with regard to economic matters—the master planner. On October 8th, 1947, he was promoted to be Minister for Economic Affairs. This meant that he would be held responsible over the whole field of production and exports and would be jointly responsible with the Chancellor of the Exchequer for all matters affecting the balance of payments.

Hardly had Stafford Cripps assumed the new responsibilities than circumstances conspired to complete the process of centralising control over the whole economic and financial set-up of the country. Mr. Dalton on his way to deliver his speech in the House of Commons was indiscreet and disclosed the contents of his Budget speech to an eager reporter of a newspaper. The next day he resigned, and Stafford Cripps became Chancellor of the Exchequer without relinquishing the work of Minister of

Economic Affairs, which post was abolished. The *Economist* of November 22nd, 1947, remarks on this appointment.

"Sir Stafford Cripps was the only possible choice to fill the vacancy.

One great gain from his appointment to the Exchequer is that it has put to an end the pretence that financial policy can contract out of general economic policy. The central position of the Treasury in the British machinery of Government has long been a stumbling block to those who want to achieve a properly coherent policy in economic affairs. The arrival at the Treasury of Sir Stafford Cripps, with his economic non-financial outlook, is from one point of view a satisfactory solution of the dilemma."

Stafford Cripps' promotion was generally acclaimed. Now he had reached the highest point of his career. No man in the country other than the Prime Minister had so much power. From the point of view of orthodox economics and politics he was the master of his subject. His critics in the House of Commons could only snipe at incidentals and could do nothing but praise the main lines of his recovery plan. His mastery of the administrative machinery which he controlled, and the apparently inexhaustible energy with which he translated his programme into action, commanded the admiration even of his most severe critics. Newspapers freely described him as the next Prime Minister of Britain.

His first great review of the whole British economic situation from the vantage ground of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was made during a debate initiated by the Opposition in the House of Commons. There was a "full house" as there usually was on these great occasions. All members were in their places. The public gallery was full and in the Ladies' Gallery sat Isobel Cripps, as was usual when Stafford had been called upon to play an important role in any debate; sharing as she does in his successes as well as his difficulties, she felt happy for him on this day. Mr. Eden was leading for the Conservatives, who everyone knew was making the most of a weak case and would really be a "chopping block" for Stafford. The whole House was waiting for the new Chancellor's speech. Mr. Eden moved that.

"This House views with grave concern the present state of the Nation and would welcome any well-chosen measures designed to check inflation and to restore the economic prosperity of the country."



Speaking immediately after Mr. Eden, Cripps agreed that it was necessary to arrest the inflationary tendencies. How? He then told what the Government had done. He explained that high taxation on companies and high surtax on individuals diminished the amount that could be spent by the higher income groups. "Pay as you Earn" of income tax diminished the spending power of the lower income groups. In addition indirect taxation of all kinds, principally on tobacco, beer, wine, spirits, together with purchase tax, bore upon all incomes, but proportionately more onerously—as indirect taxation was bound to do—upon the lower income groups. The regulations by rationing of such things as food and clothing removed the danger of those with higher incomes purchasing more than their share, the regulation through allocation of materials prevented to a large extent the use of those materials for less necessary production; but in both cases the regulations worked properly only when the inflationary condition of the market was not so strong as to counter the controls. The control of prices prevented exorbitant profits in the price of controlled articles, though the difficulties and imperfections of any price control system rendered it difficult to apply, and there was the added difficulty owing to the inequality of efficiency between the differing producing units.

Subsidies were granted to reduce the price of the most essential food-stuffs so as to hold the level of wages and salaries more stable. . . . On the financial side, the large Budget surplus which was obviously accumulating was a factor which tended to remove inflationary pressure. The Autumn Budget had increased the amount of the surplus . . . What part of the field, therefore, Cripps went on to ask, remained uncovered in order to prevent the present inflationary tendency from developing further?

The way we should all wish to overcome the danger, he continued, was by making more goods available on the home market. That was what we were aiming at. That depended however upon what we could do to increase our production over and above what we must send abroad to pay for our primary necessities of imported food-stuffs and raw materials. We had not yet achieved our export task, so that there could be no question either of devoting more of our production to the home market, or of expanding our imports in any degree. We had not yet nearly enough exports to pay for our present level of imports. If we were to achieve, even with Marshall Aid, a balance of

payments, we must greatly increase exports, and if we could not increase them sufficiently we should be driven to reduce our imports still further. He went on to stress the importance of regulating personal income, but that could be done only by free negotiation between the parties concerned. This of course led him on to the question of the relation of wages to prices, and to the importance of stabilising wages and prices by voluntary co-operation between wage-earners and wage-payers. He wanted the employers to limit profits, the workers to limit wages, and sellers of goods to limit prices. This was hedged around by a number of qualifications. There might be some adjustments within a general stable level of wages. There might be reasons for granting particular increases, but not general increases, and so on. The essence of his case was this.

"While we are in this struggle none of us can afford to improve our standard of living, because we cannot make more goods available for the home market, for some time to come. Unless we now exercise democratic restraint, the sheer facts of the situation will demand compulsions which certainly this Government is anxious to avoid."

So he continued his battle of the "gap"—centralising, controlling, streamlining, moralising, restricting, urging. Budget Day came, and standing where many famous Chancellors had stood, he presented his first Budget review of the economic and financial situation of the country and the progress it had made towards recovery and the all-important test-question of bridging the gap. Some incidental reliefs were given to the tax-payers, but the main line of his policy remained and he sounded the same sombre, austere message and warnings of the wrath to come unless the target of exports was achieved and Britain's competitive position in the world market was re-established. Considerable headway was being made, but it was too soon to say Britain was in measurable distance of "turning the corner".

His campaign for "freezing wages" met with some resistance in the Trade Unions, and that led one day to his greatest triumph within the Labour Movement. He was invited to address the Trades Union Congress held at Margate in September, 1948, and state the case of the Labour Government for the policy he was pursuing on this burning question. He had frequently addressed a Labour Party Conference, and many times had been opposed by the trade union delegates within it. This was the first time he had met the trade unionists in their own Congress. With his usual facility he prepared at the request

of the General Council of the T.U.C. an analysis of the data upon which he would justify his case, they distributed a copy of it to each delegate, which gave them ample time to study it before Cripps addressed the Congress. He not only succeeded in getting the endorsement of his policy, but undoubtedly scored a personal triumph by the manner of his address and the way he dealt with the discussion.

At the end of September, prior to a journey to Canada and the U.S.A., he told the British people with cautious optimism that, with continued aid from America in the form of loans and grants, Britain would close the gap between imports and exports by 1952. The gap was now closing. Production was increasing. The rate of production was faster. And it could be even faster if industry accepted planning, his current major objective. Exports were growing. But world prices were rising and stepping up the cost of our imports. Great difficulties still had to be overcome.

When he arrived in the United States, as on the occasion of 1940 when returning from Moscow, China and India, he met American journalists. Then he was a "man without a party" returning from a personal mission and he startled the questioners by his knowledge and capacity. This time he appeared before them as the man in charge of British economy and amazed them not only by his understanding of specifically British economic problems but his intellectual grasp of the economic picture of world affairs. At a press conference in the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City he was subjected to a long running fire of questions of every conceivable kind relating to economic affairs. His answers came back with rapidity, packed with facts and logic. Cosmopolitan journalists, accustomed by experience to distinguish between a "briefed" official and an official who writes his own brief, applauded Cripps for his mastery and range of so complicated a subject.

While in Washington on September 30th, 1948, he made another important speech to the members of the Federal Bar Association in the Great Hall of the U.S. Department of Justice. This speech was important not because of anything he had to say about the world's economic affairs, but because it revealed his whole outlook on human affairs at the apex of his career. He surveyed the drama of society's evolution to democratic forms of government and summed up his own thinking in relation thereto. This speech reveals more than any other where he has arrived since his first identification with Socialism and association with Communism. He said.

"We are living to-day in a world of more dynamic growth of ideas, of inventions, and of material development of every kind than civilisation has ever before witnessed . . .

"There can be no doubt that the whole relationship of man, as a social and political being, to material power has changed fundamentally in the last century of world history . . . Time and space are being obliterated and the good or harm that one man can do by his influence and control over others has become terrifyingly great. The accident of bad judgment or lack of control arising from physical or mental sickness may condemn hundreds of thousands or millions of people to intense suffering. We have witnessed this very phenomenon in recent years . . .

"Democracy as we understand it denotes control by a freely ascertained majority of the people over what would otherwise become the irresponsible acts of their leaders. And as a principle of Government and of political organisation it is a thousand times more important to-day than ever it was before, because the power of those leaders in terms of life and death for millions of people has been so vastly magnified.

" . . . But here we again come up against the complexities and difficulties of modern civilisation. Any community to-day must concern itself with a wide range of subjects, economic, technical, scientific, medical and so on which are really far too complex for even the most highly intelligent democratic electorate fully to comprehend. . .

" . . . The dynamic power of democracy is not in numbers or material strength or education or intelligence—though all these things have their place and some of them, like education, an important place—its power to operate is in the spirit of man and the free spirit of the people.

"Our inspiration stems from the common tradition and a common reading of history.

" . . . Of one thing we can be quite sure, that methods of government cannot become the subject matter of international commerce. Ideas can and must flow freely round the world, but systems of government must develop in their own native soil and according to the native genius of the people.

"Our only safety for the future lies in the positive and conscious exertion of spiritual control over the material actions in all world communities.

"Freedom without spirit is a contradiction in terms and spirit without religion loses its substance and strength.

"The world crisis is thus in my view basically a moral rather than a political or economic crisis. It cannot be solved by a formula however recondite or ingenious because it is in the ultimate result the willingness of the peoples through their governments to follow the concepts of their spiritual commonsense that will determine the success or failure of our

efforts. We must still do our best to devise plans and schemes which make a solution possible, but once we have decided what it is we ought to do we must put behind it all our spiritual and moral power "

Here is no revolutionary iconoclast but the superb Christian planner, steeped in his country's traditions and the traditions of his kind, wrestling with the crisis conditions of modern society, seeking an organic development of the institutions in which he has lived and risen to power. He is as convinced to-day as he was in 1931 that the "gradualism" of the MacDonald era is as futile as it was when he penned his first letter on "Socialist policy" to William Graham after the collapse of the second Labour Government. But he has left behind the "crudities" of that eventful year when one and all within the Labour Movement talked of the "breakdown of capitalism" and the need for a fundamental Socialist change in the economic foundations of society. The crisis appears to him not alone as an economic problem but a "moral problem" and the control of material things by the spirit through nationalist governments elected through the operation of political democracy. Political democracy has become to him synonymous with the Christian way of life. It is to him what pacifism was to Gandhi, a means which is an end in itself. The nationalisation of this industry or that he regards as a matter of expediency to be applied according to what is deemed to be in the national interests in the ordered development of the national life. He regards the planned development of the national economy as a whole, whether it be privately owned or state-owned, as more important than the question of ownership, the interests of the nation as paramount in deciding what should be state-owned and what privately owned, and political democracy as the Christian means whereby the spirit controls the material things of life.

A few weeks after his return to England, he made these things clear in practice for all the world to see during a great clash with Mr. Winston Churchill on the question of the nationalisation of the British steel industry. Standing at the Treasury box in the House of Commons face to face with Mr. Churchill he advanced three reasons in favour of the nationalisation of the steel industry. He said:

"Let me sum them up shortly. If, as is admitted to be necessary, there must be a large element of monopoly control in this vital element of our industrial economy, that control must be public and not private. No live and effective democracy can, in the circumstances, decide otherwise.

Secondly, so far as foreseeing the future is concerned, we cannot take the risk of our steel supplies being inadequate because the industry may not consider it economic from its point of view to risk enlarging its capacity. The State must therefore accept the responsibility which can only be exercised in conjunction with ownership. Thirdly, from a strategic point of view, we cannot risk our defence position."

Mr. Churchill intervened

"The right hon. and learned gentleman is assuming that the House believes that the Government have adopted proper measures to safeguard our defence position, and he has no right to bring arrangements about the steel industry into the forefront of his argument when so much else has been neglected."

Stafford was not to be gainsaid. Sweeping Churchill's interruption aside he went on:

"With the growing appreciation of the inter-relation of the great industries and services in the economic life of the country and of the need for foresight and planning, we have abandoned the conception that unlimited internal competition is always for the best . . . Is it right or wrong, if the nation believes that for economic reasons the steel industry should be nationalised, that that nationalisation should take place, or is there some peculiar right in the owner of this class of property to have his property preserved?"

Mr. Churchill answered:

"Yes."

The argument became more exciting as Stafford continued

' . . . and with it the power of control over the industrial life of the whole country?'

"I answer those questions without any hesitation by saying that, this challenge having been put forward by private interests, it is essential that democracy should assert its rights, as otherwise it must acknowledge for all time that it cannot touch those citadels of power, and that it is not the electorate but the owners of industrial property who shall determine the economic policies of the country. And the ugly alternative would then be that any such change which is to occur must be brought about by other and more violent means——"

A member interjected:

"By gunpowder?"

Cripps ignored the interruption and continued

"It is because we are preventing that, that Socialist Democracy is the true barrier against Communism"

Interruptions held him up.

Mr. Churchill rose Members called out "Order! Order!"

Still Mr. Churchill sought to intervene and there were more cries of "Order!"

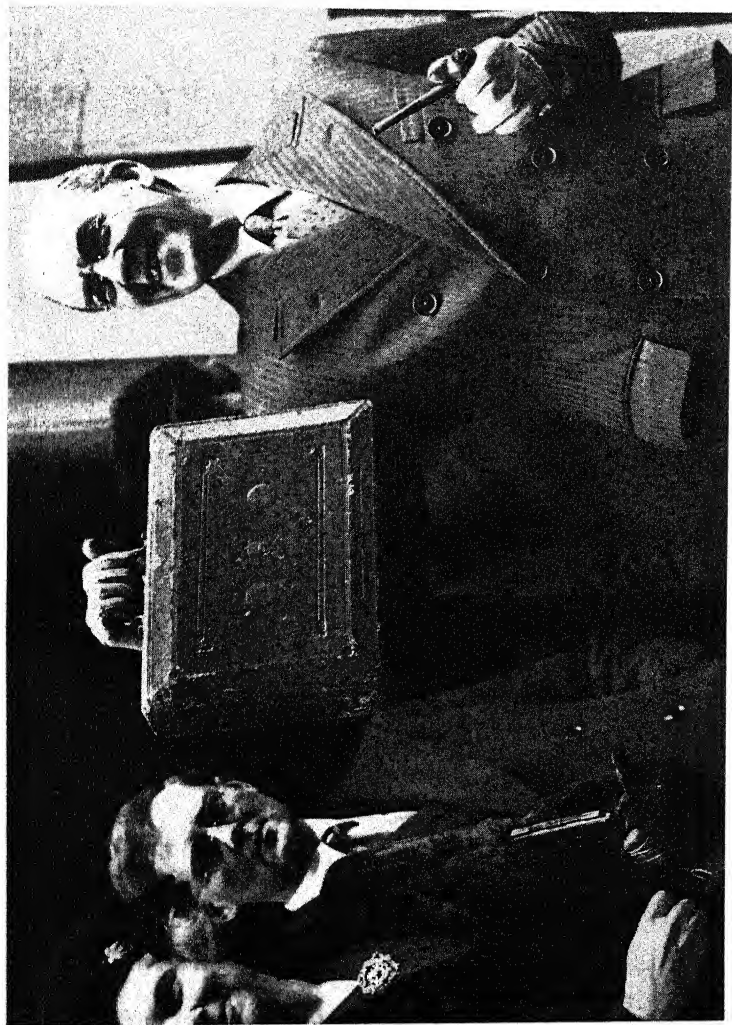
Stafford tried to continue and began "I should be interested to hear . . ."

Mr. Churchill indignantly interrupted, anxious to claim that he had been a better fighter against Communism than any of them. But he was cried down with shouts of "Order!", "Order!" Cripps got in again: "I shall be interested to hear of any case in which Conservatism has proved a barrier to Communism in the same way that Socialist Democracy has been."

The clock struck ten. The debate was ended. But it would be renewed again and again.

For here Stafford Cripps had revealed in all its completeness the consummation of the changes in his outlook since he became a British statesman, with power and the responsibility which goes with power. The moment of the great change stands out clearly like a signpost in his career. When Chamberlain signed the Munich Pact he stirred Stafford's deep nationalism as nothing else had done. Cripps felt that England had been betrayed and that Chamberlain was not merely guilty of short-sightedness but of the most cynical immorality in the conduct of international affairs, and instead of ensuring peace he had made war inevitable.

From that moment, Cripps began to shake himself free from the class struggle politics which he had pursued since the collapse of the second Labour Government in 1931. At that time he talked much of the "collapse of capitalism" and was so disgusted with the manner in which the capitalists handled the situation that he turned to the "working class" and bid them fight for power to re-organise the broken-down economy and build a new social life for the country. Although this aim was revolutionary he rejected outright any other than constitutional methods of action. He had grown up as a monarchist, a parliamentarian, a legalist and was opposed to social violence. Empirical and pragmatic by nature and training, and above all a Christian moralist, he expounded his drastic programme of Socialisation with vigour and con-



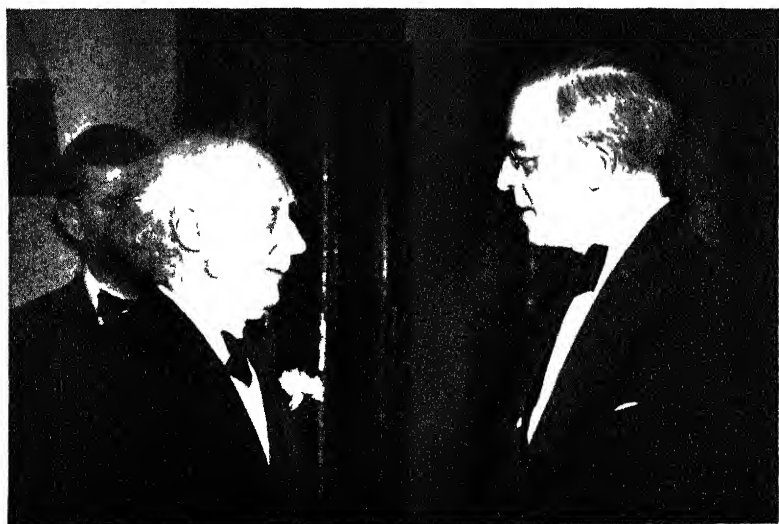
HIS FIRST BUDGET: LEAVING 11, DOWNING STREET WITH LADY CRIPPS AND HIS SON, JOHN, 1948

*(Photo: David Hovav)*





WITH DAUGHTER PEGGY ON HIS RETURN FROM AMERICA, 1948  
*(Photo P 1-Reuter)*



HIS FRIEND F. M ALEXANDER CELEBRATES HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY,  
 1949

*(Photo Daily Herald)*



AT THE CHRISTENING OF HIS GRANDDAUGHTER, SARAH LILIAN (SALLY), WITH HIS DAUGHTER, THERESA (LADY RICKETTS) AND SON-IN-LAW, SIR ROBERT RICKETTS, 1948



KNITTING A DAISY CHAIN, WITH HIS DAUGHTER DIANA, YORK, 1949



CRIPPS HANDLES A PRESS CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK, 1948

viction But he was ever a consistent nationalist even in the exposition of his class-struggle programme.

It was "Munich" that changed everything for him. From the signing of that pact until the end of the war "Britain's" fate in world affairs concerned him more than the relation of the classes in Britain. He had desired the unity of the "British" people in a popular front to save "Britain" from Fascism and war. His "Popular Front" was not conceived as an "alliance of classes" as propounded by the Communists but as an alliance of people of all classes. His expulsion from the Labour Party deprived him of the means of further mass campaigns to this end. The war transformed the circumstances and produced the "Government of Concentration" or "the 'national' Popular Front Government" at war with Fascism. He no longer relied wholly on "the working class" but on "the nation". His national patriotism came into its own as the dominating influence. His experience as Ambassador, unofficial and official, strengthened his nationalism. His experience as an administrator, "controlling private capitalism" for a "National" Government, gave him great confidence in the possibility of "planning private enterprise". From the *practice* of statesmanship and acceptance of responsibilities of Government he had become the "planner of the new order of social democracy".

So the impatient Christian, who in 1931 morally condemned capitalism and challenged its supporters to make way for the social and economic regeneration of Britain by the working class, had become the Christian British statesman who believed that capitalism had not to be immediately replaced by Socialism and society could be more efficiently subordinated to the interests of the "nation" if human relations were made morally better. "The world crisis," he said in September, 1948, to the Federal Bar Association of America, "is thus basically a moral rather than a political or economic crisis." Hence, the problems of the world can be dealt with by Christianity transforming people in their relations one with another, irrespective of class and contradictory interests. He does not regard "private property in the means of production" as immoral but holds that, at times, it is inexpedient in the national interests that some parts of the national economy should remain privately owned. His differences with the Tories, as exemplified in the clash with Winston Churchill in the debate on the nationalisation of the steel industry, arose not from a difference of moral attitude to nationalisation "as a principle", but as to the expediency of its

application at the present time. His challenge to the Tories to-day is not the challenge he made in 1931 of "Socialism versus Capitalism". His challenge is that it is necessary to control capitalism in the nation's interests; also that it is the most patriotic way of blocking the road to Communism, and capitalist reaction

Had there been no crisis in 1931 which threw the political parties of Britain on to the side of rival classes, the logic of Stafford Cripps' development from the Christian reformer, who had accepted the "gradualist programme of MacDonald", would have found its fullest expression at a much earlier date. Viewing his career in perspective the crisis years of 1931 to 1939 constitute a violent deviation from gradualism and it was the Second World War which hauled him back to his traditional course. Intellectually, he had been capable of becoming a great revolutionary leader. But Stafford Cripps is more than an intellectually brilliant man. He is to-day's supreme English expression of those to whom Communism was anathema, and ordered, planned progress "without violent interruptions of the organic process" was the obvious mode of development for the Christian way of life. This tradition to-day governs all aspects of his policy and its tenets are established in his mind as a logical, all-embracing philosophy.

Just as he emerged from "class struggle" politics in home affairs on to the high ground of controlled "national" economy, so, too, was his outlook on international affairs transformed. His friendship for the Russian Revolution, upon which he won great fame, grew out of his association with "class struggle" politics and lingered the longest because of his concentration on domestic, industrial and economic affairs. But as the re-orientation of the nations followed the defeat of the Fascist powers and took shape with nations aligning themselves according to the loyalties of their own political and economic systems, the attitude of Stafford Cripps and other Labour Party leaders to Russia and its revolution changed. Cripps' role as the "master planner of Britain's mixed economy" now had its international complement. He figured increasingly as Britain's spokesman in the great attempt to plan the recovery of the Western nations of Europe and the Commonwealth into free multilateral trading communities. In all his striving for Britain's recovery he has had to gear his plans to the larger Marshall Plan, which aimed, by means of capital assistance from America, to enable each of its recipients to become independent competitive nations, without

further assistance from the U.S.A. after 1952.

In the first year of the plan's operation Britain, under Sir Stafford's direction, made great headway. So much was this the case that he cautiously held before the people the prospect that by the appointed year Britain would be able to close the gap between imports from the U.S.A. and exports to the U.S.A. and thereby overcome Britain's "dollar shortage". But 1949 saw "unforeseen" trends developing crisis conditions which thrust Sir Stafford into the foreground of international economic and financial affairs. The "gap" had begun to widen again. Gold drained away from Britain's reserves at an alarming rate. A recession of trade had started in the U.S.A. World prices were falling. The "sellers'" market was replaced by the "buyers'" market. Britain's prices remained high and her sales to America contracted. The U.S.A., with lowered economic activity, bought less from the "sterling area". The situation was exacerbated by the operation of the Intra-European Payments Agreement of the Marshall Plan. This had led to Belgium and Switzerland drawing heavily on Britain's gold. By June, 1949, the drawing of gold from Britain had reached disturbing proportions; her gold and dollar reserves had shrunk to nearly £400,000,000.

There were two aspects to the crisis. The main one was the "gap" in trade between Britain and the Western European countries and the U.S.A. The other was not so fundamental and was susceptible of immediate solution. That was the question of intra-European payments. The first year's agreement ended on June 30th, 1949. Could Sir Stafford persuade his colleagues on the European Recovery Committee to alter the payment arrangements? The Conference met early in July. From the beginning, he literally dominated the scene. He succeeded in persuading the Committee to agree to changes in the arrangements covered by the Intra-European Payments Agreement for the second year of Marshall Aid. These changes would stop the excessive flow of gold from European countries. That was announced as a "Cripps victory" and again at home and abroad he stood high in the esteem of men. But the major problem of the "dollar gap" remained, against which he had pitted his whole recovery plan to be achieved without de-valuing the pound as a means of combating the falling prices in America. Standing before the House of Commons on July 7th, 1949, he boldly justified his stand against the devaluation of the pound and made it clear that he would continue to stand by this and

by his planned recovery programme in the forthcoming conferences of the Commonwealth nations and with the American Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. John Snyder.

Thus he proclaimed to all the world that what he believes to be the Christian "middle of the road" way of life, the answer to Britain's and the world's economic problems, is Democratic Socialism, as against Political Democracy alone in the U.S.A. dominated by monopoly capitalism, or the economic power of the few, and on the other side as against Soviet Russia, controlled by the dictatorship of the proletariat, or the Communist Party.

## EPILOGUE

AS I break off this story of Sir Stafford Cripps, he has just passed his sixtieth birthday. He is on the heights of power. Men speak of him as the Economic Dictator of Britain—that he has still heights to climb and that he will reach them. Becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer and director of the British economy in the midst of extraordinary crisis conditions at home and abroad, he has so grappled with the problem which this high position has imposed upon him that even political opponents pay tribute to his masterly grasp of the task he has set himself to accomplish. Already he is renowned as the man who set his country on the high road to post-war recovery. At no time, with the possible exception of the days immediately following his famous broadcast on returning from the Soviet Union, has he been held in higher esteem by the people of Britain.

And how different are the circumstances of these two occasions. Then, he was a leader without a party dependent for the fulfilment of his role in political leadership upon the support of the great parties which were functioning in a coalition he had striven to bring about. Now he has become a foremost leader of the Labour Party which in 1939 had thrown him out, a veritable generalissimo of the army of Labour, holding the key position governing British economy and the post recognised as but one step removed from the premiership. These are not the only striking differences between the days before the war and after. Then he was in constant conflict with his fellow leaders of the Labour Party. To-day he proceeds in happy harmony with colleagues he repeatedly combated when the Labour Party was fighting for power. Their differences have been resolved in a common purpose and common responsibility of Government. How far this is due to changes in the political outlook of Stafford Cripps and changes in circumstances I must leave the political theorist to seek out. But one thing is certain amidst all the changes. The application of the Christian ethic in his relation-



ship with his fellow men and the task of changing the world that all men could better live the Christian life has been and continues to be the leitmotiv.

Indeed it may justly be said that Stafford Cripps is a twentieth-century fulfilment of the Cripps-Potter family traditions. Through him speaks Lord Parmoor, the Reverend Henry Cripps, John H. Cripps, M.P., Theresa Potter, Richard Potter, M.P., all of whom form part of that great humanistic trend of English social and political life so well exemplified by Shaftesbury, Kingsley, Toynbee, Farrar, Archbishop Temple. His emergence into political life was through the Church, when, shocked by the First World War, he stepped into the leadership of the English section of the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. The spirit of his emergence can well be expressed in his own poetic words

THERE WAS A BABY IN BETHLEHEM—

I know they say

That this and that's in doubt, and for the rest

That learned men—who surely should know best

Explain how Myths crept in, and followers' tales

Confused the truth

I KNOW; but anyway

There *was* a baby born in BETHLEHEM,

Who lived and grew, and loved, and healed and taught,

And died.—but not to me—

When Christmas comes, I see HIM still arise,

The gentle, the compassionate, the wise,

Wiping earth's tears away, stilling the strife

Calling—my path is PEACE, my way is LIFE

His decision to join the Labour Party and the acceptance of its programme of action and its Socialist aims was not an abandonment of the Church in favour of this mode of application of the Christian ethic to social life but only a recognition of the fact that the Church could not function as a political party. Indeed, so far from leaving the Church he devoted much time and energy to it with a view to rousing the Christian conscience to a realisation of its social function. So much has he contributed in this direction that he is recognised as the leading lay churchman of his day. The Rev. Mervyn Stockwood says of him:

"I would hazard a prophecy—Sir Stafford is now regarded first and foremost as the politician who may save the country. In a century hence

he may be regarded first and foremost as the Churchman who, following in the footsteps of William Temple, made Christianity a vital and practical force in the life of the nation "

In this, therefore, as in every other activity he has run true to form. From boyhood to manhood, he must ride the fastest, work the hardest, top the class, captain the team, capture the prizes. He concentrated on the science of chemistry and eclipsed his contemporaries, becoming the youngest man of his generation to stand before the Royal Society and deliver his findings in original research to the leading scientists of his day. From science to law the story has run true to pattern. From the youngest lawyer to become a K. C. he forged ahead until his services were in greater demand than those of any other lawyer and he became the highest paid lawyer in the Kingdom. From the law to administration and statesmanship he advanced with speed into the foremost positions. As statesman no one questions his status as a leader of the British Cabinet or his brilliance as economic director and Chancellor.

But to Sir Stafford Cripps, science, law, administration and statesmanship were not ends in themselves nor the dominant features of his life. They are incidental to the larger purpose, the tools, as it were, of his equipment for the fulfilment of his mission of applied Christianity which has grown with the passing of the years. He is not a political theorist and has never laid claim to be such. He is the missioner of the deed, the planner of action. "By their deeds ye shall know them" is his challenging theme in Church and politics.

And he deems that:

"Now is the urgent hour.  
The world rocks in uncertain fate;  
In Christ we have the power  
To lift the burden of our fear

Grant us the courage, Lord,  
To face the vision of Thy Cross  
And in the flame of Thy accord  
To win the prize of love.

Deep in our hearts there lies  
The knowledge of Thy love and strength  
Give us the will that ties  
Our daily action to our faith "

The Christianity of Jesus provides him with the moral concepts and conscience which he brings to bear upon every problem. His range of subjects is extraordinary and his mind works with exceptional speed. His method of analysis is the characteristically empirical one of the lawyer and the experimental scientist. Analysis without action is incomprehensible to him, however, for he is pragmatic by nature and his mind demands that he proceed quickly from words to deeds and quick results.

Of all his colleagues in leadership in Church and State there is none more self-controlled and composed. It is this which gives to so many people the impression that he is cold and detached and unfeeling, lacking in emotion, a man of light without heat, of austerity with no prospect of abundance; as Mark Hewitson, the British Trades Union leader, says, "Cripps talks cold but acts warm." It is a wrong impression. Stafford Cripps is a man of deep convictions, passionate feeling and enduring attachments. In no aspect of his life is this better exemplified than in his home.

Stafford Cripps married Isobel Swithinbank when he was twenty-two years of age—his wife was twenty. They have been married nearly forty years. To this day, and all through the years, they have exchanged letters if separated from each other for a single day. They have three daughters and a son, now grown to womanhood and manhood, and six grandchildren. The home and family have been the centre from which Stafford Cripps has drawn his strength and really determined his course. But Isobel Cripps has been more than a wife and mother to his children. She has grown with Stafford out of the same social stratum, with the same religious upbringing and social values and culture. She has merged completely into the Crippsian tradition and has fostered his ambitions, cherished his ideals, and "managed" him as maternal women know by instinct how to manage "their men folk" and the people who gather round them. So Stafford's home has been more than a place of rest and relaxation. It has been a power-house of affectionate inspiration and superb companionship and fellowship in a common way of life. I do not mean to suggest that Isobel Cripps always stayed at home while Stafford went into the larger world; that would leave a false impression. For when Stafford went to Moscow as Ambassador she joined him there. When he fought an election she would be in the constituency rallying the women to vote for her husband. When he visited factories she almost always accompanied him. Often she listened to him speak in the House of Commons. And after his trip to China, she and their daughter

Peggy, at the invitation of the Chinese Government, followed in his tracks independently on an "unofficial" goodwill mission facilitated by the British Government, to see the results of the financial aid to China which had been raised over her name. But wherever she went, whether with him or to him, she carried with her the atmosphere of their home, which to both of them was the microcosm of the world of their dreams: the cultured, refined, happy, well-to-do Christian home of the English countryside, the sheet anchor of their social life and the spiritual source from whence they drew their inspiration to launch forth into the wider world of the affairs of men.

Beatrice and Sidney Webb, aunt and uncle of the Cripps', formed of their lives the great partnership in social research. Isobel and Stafford Cripps have formed a great partnership of Christian family fellowship and the professionalism of law, science and politics.

To-day Sir Stafford Cripps, P.C., K.C., M.P., F.R.S., LL.D., Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Isobel his wife, live at 11, Downing Street, London, next door to the Prime Minister of Britain, who resides at No. 10. From there he is grappling with the problems of British economy at home and abroad. With superb energy and serenity of mind, with patience, persistence and politeness he forges ahead, self-confident, self-controlled, knowing full well that the surest guarantee for to-morrow lies in the mastery of the job he is doing to-day.

He is physically and spiritually young. His mind is quick. He stands and sits upright, his eyes are bright and he looks at you fair, square and pleasantly. He stands well poised and at ease, assured and confident. He has travelled far and wide. At the age of sixty, Stafford Cripps has established himself in the front rank of the leaders of men and among the foremost British statesmen of his day.

*London,*  
*August 18, 1949*

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